

THE SPURGEON SERMON
COLLECTION
55 SELECTED EXPOSITIONS
by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

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CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON
ARRANGED BY DATE

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THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT

THE SIN OF UNBELIEF

A Sermon

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 14, 1855, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“And that Lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes but shalt not eat thereof”

— 2 Kings 7:19

One wise man may deliver a whole city; one good man may be the means of safety to a thousand others. The holy ones are “the salt of the earth,” the means of the preservation of the wicked.

Without the godly as a conserve, the race would be utterly destroyed. In the city of Samaria there was one righteous man — Elisha, the servant of the Lord. Piety was altogether extinct in the court. The king was a sinner of the blackest dye, his iniquity was glaring and infamous. Jehoram walked in the ways of his father Ahab, and made unto himself false gods. The people of Samaria were fallen like their monarch; they had gone astray from Jehovah; they had forsaken the God of Israel: they remembered not the watchword of Jacob, “The Lord thy God is one God;” and in wicked idolatry they bowed before the idols of the heathens, and therefore the Lord of Hosts suffered their enemies to oppress them until the curse of Ebal was fulfilled in the streets of Samaria, for “the tender and delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness,” had an evil eye to her own children, and devoured her offspring by reason of fierce hunger (Deuteronomy 28:56-58). In this awful extremity the one holy man was the medium of salvation. The one grain of salt preserved the entire city; the one warrior for God was the

means of the deliverance of the whole beleaguered multitude. For Elisha's sake the Lord sent the promise that the next day, food which could not be obtained at any price, should be had at the cheapest possible rate — at the very gates of Samaria. We may picture the joy of the multitude when first the seer uttered this prediction. They knew him to be a prophet of the Lord; he had divine credentials; all his past prophecies had been fulfilled. They knew that he was a man sent of God, and uttering Jehovah's message. Surely the monarch's eyes would glisten with delight, and the emaciated multitude would leap for joy at the prospects of so speedy a release from famine. "To-morrow, would they shout, "*to-morrow* our hunger shall be over, and we shall feast to the full.

However, the Lord on whom the king leaned expressed his disbelief. We hear not that any of the common people, the plebeians, ever did so; but an aristocrat did it. Strange it is, that God has seldom chosen the great men of this world. High places and faith in Christ do seldom well agree. This great man said, "Impossible!" and, with an insult to the prophet, he added, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be." His sin lay in the fact, that after repeated seals of Elisha's ministry, he yet disbelieved the assurances uttered by the prophet on God's behalf. He had, doubtless, seen the marvelous defeat of Moab; he had been startled at tidings of the resurrection of the Shunamite's son; he knew that Elisha had revealed Benhadad's secrets and smitten his marauding hosts with blindness; he had seen the bands of Syria decoyed into the heart of Samaria; and he probably knew the story of the widow, whose oil filled all the vessels, and redeemed her sons; at all events the cure of Naaman was common conversation at court; and yet, in the face of all this accumulated evidence, in the teeth of all these credentials of the prophet's mission, he yet doubted, and insultingly told him that heaven must become an open casement, ere the promise could be performed. Whereupon God pronounced his doom by the mouth of the man who had just now proclaimed the promise: thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. And providence — which always fulfills prophecy, just as the paper takes the stamp of the type — destroyed the man. Trodden down in the streets of Samaria, he perished at its gates, beholding the plenty, but tasting not of it. Perhaps his carriage was haughty, and insulting to the people; or he tried to restrain their eager rush; or, as we would say, it might have been by mere accident that he was crushed to death; so that he

saw the prophecy fulfilled, but never lived to enjoy it. In his case, seeing was believing, but it was not enjoying.

I shall this morning invite your attention to two things — the man's *sin* and his punishment. Perhaps I shall say but little of this man, since I have detailed the circumstances, but I shall discourse upon the sin of unbelief and the punishment thereof.

I. And first, the SIN.

His sin was *unbelief*. He doubted the promise of God. In this particular case unbelief took the form of a doubt of the divine veracity, or a mistrust of God's power. Either he doubted whether God really meant what he said, or whether it was within the range of possibility that God should fulfill his promise. Unbelief hath more phases than the moon, and more colors than the chameleon. Common people say of the devil, that he is seen sometimes in one shape, and sometimes in another. I am sure this is true of Satan's first-born child — unbelief, for its forms are legion. At one time I see unbelief dressed out as an angel of light. It calls itself humility, and it saith, "I would not be presumptuous; I dare not think that God would pardon me; I am too great a sinner." We call that humility, and thank God that our friend is in so good a condition. I do not thank God for any such delusion. It is the devil dressed as an angel of light; it is unbelief after all. At other times we detect unbelief in the shape of a doubt of God's immutability: "The Lord has loved me, but perhaps he will cast me off to-morrow. He helped me yesterday, and under the shadows of his wings I trust; but perhaps I shall receive no help in the next affliction. He may have cast me off; he may be unmindful of his covenant, and forget to be gracious." Sometimes this infidelity is embodied in a doubt of God's power. We see every day new straits, we are involved in a net of difficulties, and we think "surely the Lord cannot deliver us." We strive to get rid of our burden, and finding that we cannot do it, we think God's arm is as short as ours, and his power as little as human might. A fearful form of unbelief is that doubt which keeps men from coming to Christ; which leads the sinner to distrust the ability of Christ to save him, to doubt the willingness of Jesus to accept so great a transgressor. But the most hideous of all is the traitor, in its true colors, blaspheming God, and madly denying his existence. Infidelity, deism, and atheism, are the ripe fruits of this pernicious tree; they are the most terrific eruptions of the volcano of

unbelief. Unbelief hath become of full stature, when quitting the mask and laying aside disguise, it profanely stalks the earth, uttering the rebellious cry, “No God,” striving in vain to shake the throne of the divinity, by lifting up its arm against Jehovah, and in its arrogance would

“Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Re-judge his justice — be the God of God.”

Then truly unbelief has come to its full perfection, and then you see what it really is, for the least unbelief is of the same nature as the greatest.

I am astonished, and I am sure you will be, when I tell you that there are some strange people in the world who do not believe that unbelief is a sin. Strange people I must call them, because they are sound in their faith in every other respect; only, to make the articles of their creed consistent, as they imagine, they deny that unbelief is sinful.

I remember a young man going into a circle of friends and ministers, who were disputing whether it was a sin in men that they did not believe the gospel. Whilst they were discussing it, he said, “Gentlemen am I in the presence of Christians? Are you believers in the Bible, or are you not?” They said, “We are Christians of course.” “Then,” said he, “does not the Scripture say, ‘of sin, because they believed not on me?’ And is it not the damning sin of sinners, that they do not believe on Christ?” I could not have thought that persons should be so fool-hardy as to venture to assert that, “it is no sin for a sinner not to believe on Christ.” I thought that, however far they might wish to push their sentiments, they would not tell a lie to uphold the truth, and, in my opinion this is what such men are really doing. Truth is a strong tower and never requires to be buttressed with error. God’s Word will stand against all man’s devices. I would never invent a sophism to prove that it is no sin on the part of the ungodly not to believe, for I am sure it is, when I am taught in the Scriptures that, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light,” and when I read, “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the Son of God,” I affirm, and the Word declares it, *unbelief is a sin*. Surely with rational and unprejudiced persons, it cannot require any reasoning to prove it. Is it not a sin for a creature to doubt the word of its Maker? Is it not a crime and an insult to the Divinity, for me, an atom, a particle of dust, to dare to deny

his words? Is it not the very summit of arrogance and extremity of pride for a son of Adam to say, even in his heart, “God I doubt thy grace; God I doubt thy love, God I doubt thy power?” Oh! sirs believe me, could ye roll all sins into one mass, — could you take murder, and blasphemy, and lust, adultery, and fornication, and everything that is vile and unite them all into one vast globe of black corruption, they would not equal even then the sin of unbelief. This is the monarch sin, the quintessence of guilt; the mixture of the venom of all crimes; the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah; it is the A1 sin, the master-piece of Satan, the chief work of the devil.

I shall attempt this morning, for a little while, to shew the extremely evil nature of the sin of unbelief.

1. And first the sin of unbelief will appear to be extremely heinous when we remember that *it is the parent of every other iniquity*. There is no crime which unbelief will not beget. I think that the fall of man is very much owing to it. It was in this point that the devil tempted Eve. He said to her, “Yea, *hath* God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” He whispered and insinuated a doubt, “Yea, *hath* God said so?” as much as to say, “Are you *quite* sure he said so?” It was by means of unbelief — that thin part of the wedge — that the other sin entered; curiosity and the rest followed; she touched the fruit, and destruction came into this world. Since that time, unbelief has been the prolific parent of all guilt. An unbeliever is capable of the vilest crime that ever was committed. Unbelief, sirs! why it hardened the heart of Pharaoh — it gave license to the tongue of blaspheming Rabshaket — yea, it became a deicide, and murdered Jesus. Unbelief! — it has sharpened the knife of the suicide! it has mixed many a cup of poison; thousands it has brought to the halter; and many to a shameful grave, who have murdered themselves and rushed with bloody hands before their Creator’s tribunal, because of unbelief. Give me an unbeliever — let me know that he doubts God’s word — let me know that he distrusts his promise and his threatening; and with that for a premise, I will conclude that the man shall, by-and-bye unless there is amazing restraining power exerted upon him, be guilty of the foulest and blackest crimes. Ah! this is a Beelzebub sin; like Beelzebub, it is the leader of all evil spirits. It is said of Jeroboam that he sinned and made Israel to sin; and it may be said of unbelief that it not only sins itself, but makes others sin;

it is the egg of all crime, the seed of every offence; in fact everything that is evil and vile lies couched in that one word — unbelief.

And let me say here, that unbelief in the Christian is of the self-same nature as unbelief in the sinner. It is not the same in its final issue, for it will be pardoned in the Christian; yea, it is pardoned: it was laid upon the scapegoat's head of old; it was blotted out and atoned for; but it is of the same sinful nature. In fact, if there can be one sin more heinous than the unbelief of a sinner, it is the unbelief of a saint. For a saint to doubt God's word — for a saint to distrust God after innumerable instances of his love, after ten thousand proofs of his mercy, exceeds everything. In a saint, moreover, unbelief is the root of other sins. When I am perfect in faith, I shall be perfect in everything else; I should always fulfill the precept if I always believed the promise. But it is because my faith is weak, that I sin. Put me in trouble, and if I can fold my arms and say, Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will provide, you will not find me using wrong means to escape from it. But let me be in temporal distress and difficulty; if I distrust God, what then? Perhaps I shall steal, or do a dishonest act to get out of the hands of my creditors; or if kept from such a transgression, I may plunge into excess to drown my anxieties. Once take away faith, the reins are broken; and who can ride an unbroken steed without rein or bridle? Like the chariot of the sun, with Phaeton for its driver, such should we be without faith. Unbelief is the mother of vice; it is the parent of sin; and, therefore, I say it is a pestilent evil — a master sin.

2. But secondly; *unbelief not only begets, but fosters sin*. How is it that men can keep their sin under the thunders of the Sinai preacher? How is it that, when Boanerges stands in the pulpit, and, by the grace of God, cries aloud, "Cursed is every man that keepeth not all the commands of the law," — how is it that when the sinner hears the tremendous threatenings of God's justice, still he is hardened, and walks on in his evil ways? I will tell you; it is because unbelief of that threatening prevents it from having any effect upon him. When our sappers and miners go to work around Sebastopol, they could not work in front of the walls, if they had not something to keep off the shots; so they raise earthworks, behind which they can do what they please. So with the ungodly man. The devil gives him unbelief; he thus puts up an earthwork, and finds refuge behind it. Ah! sinners, when once the Holy Ghost knocks down your unbelief — when

once he brings home the truth in demonstration and in power, how the law will work upon your soul. If man did but believe that the law is holy, that the commandments are holy, just, and good, how he would be shaken over hell's mouth; there would be no sitting and sleeping in God's house; no careless hearers; no going away and straightway forgetting what manner of men ye are. Oh! once get rid of unbelief, how would ever ball from the batteries of the law fall upon the sinner, and the slain of the Lord would be many. Again, how is it that men can hear the wooing of the cross of Calvary, and yet come not to Christ? How is it that when we preach about the sufferings of Jesus, and close up by saying, "yet there is room," — how is it that when we dwell upon his cross and passion, men are not broken in their hearts? It is said,

Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone:
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve a heart of stone.

Methinks the tale of Calvary is enough to break a rock. Rocks did rend when they saw Jesus die. Methinks the tragedy of Golgotha is enough to make a flint gush with tears, and to make the most hardened wretch weep out his eye in drops of penitential love; but yet we tell it you, and repeat it oft, but who weeps over it? Who cares about it? Sirs, ye sit as unconcerned as if it did not signify to you. Oh! behold and see all ye that pass by. Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die? Ye seem to say "It is nothing." What is the reason? Because there is unbelief between you and the cross. If there were not that thick veil between you and the Saviour's eyes, his looks of love would melt you. But unbelief is the sin which keeps the power of the gospel from working in the sinner: and it is not till the Holy Ghost strikes that unbelief out — it is not till the Holy Spirit rends away that infidelity and takes it altogether down, that we can find the sinner coming to put his trust in Jesus.

3. But there is a third point. *Unbelief disables a man for the performance of any good work.* "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," is a great truth in more senses than one. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." You shall never hear me say a word against morality; you shall never hear me say that honesty is not a good thing, or that sobriety is not a good thing; on the contrary, I would say they are commendable things; but I will tell

you what I will say afterwards — I will tell you that they are just like the cowries of Hindostan; they may pass current among the Indians, but they will not do in England; these virtues may be current here below, but not above. If you have not something better than your own goodness, you will never get to heaven. Some of the Indian tribes use little strips of cloth instead of money, and I would not find fault with them if I lived there; but when I come to England, strips of cloth will not suffice. So honesty, sobriety, and such things, may be very good amongst men — and the more you have of them the better. I exhort you, whatsoever things are lovely and pure, and of good report, have them — but they will not do up there. All these things put together, without faith, do not please God. Virtues without faith are whitewashed sins. Obedience without faith, if it is possible, is a gilded disobedience. Not to believe, nullifies everything. It is the fly in the ointment; it is the poison in the pot. Without faith, with all the virtues of purity, with all the benevolence of philanthropy, with all the kindness of disinterested sympathy, with all the talents of genius, with all the bravery of patriotism, and with all the decision of principle — “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Do you not see then, how bad unbelief is, because it prevents men from performing good works. Yea, even in Christians themselves, unbelief disables them. Let me just tell you a tale — a story of Christ’s life. A certain man had an afflicted son, possessed with an evil spirit. Jesus was up in Mount Tabor, transfigured; so the father brought his son to the disciples. What did the disciples do?: They said, “Oh, we will cast him out.” They put their hands upon him, and they tried to do it; but they whispered among themselves and said, “We are afraid we shall not be able.” By-and-by the diseased man began to froth at the mouth; he foamed and scratched the earth, claspings it in his paroxysms. The demoniac spirit within him was alive. The devil was still there. In vain their repeated exorcism, the evil spirit remained like a lion in his den, nor could their efforts dislodge him. “Go!” said they; but he went not. “Away to the pit!” they cried; but he remained immovable. The lips of unbelief cannot affright the Evil One, who might well have said, “Faith I know, Jesus I know, but who are ye? ye have no faith.” If they had faith, as a grain of mustard seed, they might have cast the devil out; but their faith was gone, and therefore they could do nothing. Look at poor Peter’s case, too. While he had faith, Peter walked on the waves of the sea. That was a splendid walk; I almost envy him treading upon the billows. Why, if

Peter's faith had continued, he might have walked across the Atlantic to America. But presently there came a billow behind him, and he said, "That will sweep me away;" and then another before, and he cried out, "That will overwhelm me;" and he thought — how could I be so presumptuous as to be walking on the top of these waves? Down goes Peter. Faith was Peter's life-buoy; faith was Peter's charm — it kept him up; but unbelief sent him down. Do you know that you and I, all our lifetime, will have to walk on the water? A Christian's life is always walking on water — mine is — and every wave would swallow and devour him, but faith makes him stand. The moment you cease to believe, that moment distress comes in, and down you go. Oh! wherefore dost thou doubt, then?

Faith fosters every virtue; unbelief murders every one. Thousands of prayers have been strangled in their infancy by unbelief. Unbelief has been guilty of infanticide; it has murdered many an infant petition; many a song of praise that would have swelled the chorus of the skies, has been stifled by an unbelieving murmur; many a noble enterprise conceived in the heart has been blighted ere it could come forth, by unbelief. Many a man would have been a missionary; would have stood and preached his Master's gospel boldly; but he had unbelief. Once make a giant unbelieving, and he becomes a dwarf. Faith is the Samsonian lock of the Christian; cut it off, and you may put out his eyes — and he can do nothing.

4. Our next remark is — *unbelief has been severely punished*. Turn you to the Scriptures! I see a world all fair and beautiful; its mountains laughing in the sun, and the fields rejoicing in the golden light. I see maidens dancing, and young men singing. How fair the vision! But lo! a grave and reverend sire lifts up his hand, and cries, "A flood is coming to deluge the earth: the fountains of the great deep will be broken up, and all things will be covered. See yonder ark! One hundred and twenty years have I toiled with these my hands to build it; flee there, and you are safe." "Aha! old man; away with your empty predictions! Aha! let us be happy while we may! when the flood comes, then we will build an ark; but there is no flood coming; tell that to fools; we believe no such things." See the unbelievers pursue their merry dance. Hark! Unbeliever. Dost thou not hear rumbling noise? Earth's bowels have begun to move, her rocky ribs are strained by dire convulsions from within; lo! they break with the enormous strain, and forth from between them torrents rush unknown since God concealed them

in the bosom of our world. Heaven is split in sunder! it rains. Not drops, but clouds descend. A cataract, like that of old Niagara, rolls from heaven with mighty noise. Both firmaments, both deeps — the deep below and deep above — do clasp their hands. Now unbelievers, where are you now! There is your last remnant. A man — his wife clasping him round the waist — stands on the last summit that is above the water. See him there? The water is up to his loins even now. Hear his last shriek! He is floating — he is drowned. And as Noah looks from the ark he sees nothing. Nothing! It is a void profound. “Sea monsters whelp and stable in the palaces of kings.” All is overthrown, covered, drowned. What hath done it? What brought the flood upon the earth? Unbelief. By faith Noah escaped from the flood. By unbelief the rest were drowned.

And, oh! do you not know that unbelief kept Moses and Aaron out of Canaan? They honored not God; they struck the rock when they ought to have spoken to it. They disbelieved: and therefore the punishment came upon them, that they should not inherit that good land, for which they had toiled and labored.

Let me take you where Moses and Aaron dwelt — to the vast and howling wilderness. We will walk about it for a time; sons of the weary foot, we will become like the wandering Bedouins, we will tread the desert for a while. There lies a carcass whitened in the sun; there another, and there another. What means these bleached bones? What are these bodies — there a man, and there a woman? What are all these? How came these corpses here? Surely some grand encampment must have been here cut off in a single night by a blast, or by bloodshed. Ah; no, no. Those bones are the bones of Israel; those skeletons are the old tribes of Jacob. They could not enter because of unbelief. They trusted not in God. Spies said they could not conquer the land. Unbelief was the cause of their death. It was not the Anakims that destroyed Israel; it was not the howling wilderness which devoured them; it was not the Jordan which proved a barrier to Canaan; neither Hivite or Jebusite slew them; it was unbelief alone which kept them out of Canaan. What a doom to be pronounced on Israel, after forty years of journeying; they could not enter because of unbelief!

Not to multiply instances, recollect Zechariah. He doubted, and the angel struck him dumb. His mouth was closed because of unbelief. But oh! if you would have the worst picture of the effects of unbelief — if you

would see how God has punished it, I must take you to the siege of Jerusalem, that worst massacre which time has ever seen; when the Romans razed the walls to the ground, and put the whole of the inhabitants to the sword, or sold them as slaves in the market-place. Have you ever read of the destruction of Jerusalem, by Titus? Did you never turn to the tragedy of Masada, when the Jews stabbed each other rather than fall into the hands of the Romans? Do you not know, that to this day the Jew walks through the earth a wanderer, without a home and without a land? He is cut off, as a branch is cut from a vine; and why? Because of unbelief. Each time ye see a Jew with a sad and somber countenance — each time ye mark him like a denizen of another land, treading as an exile in this our country — each time ye see him, pause and say, “Ah! it was unbelief which caused thee to murder Christ, and now it has driven thee to be a wanderer; and faith alone — faith in the crucified Nazarene — can fetch thee back to thy country, and restore it to its ancient grandeur.” Unbelief, you see, has the Cain-mark upon its forehead. God hates it; God has dealt hard blows upon it: and God will ultimately crush it. Unbelief dishonors God. Every other crime touches God’s territory; but unbelief aims a blow at his divinity, impeaches his veracity, denies his goodness, blasphemes his attributes, maligns his character; therefore, God of all things, hates first and chiefly, unbelief, wherever it is.

5. And now to close this point — for I have been already too long — let me remark that you will observe the heinous nature of unbelief in this — that *it is the damning sin*. There is one sin for which Christ never died; it is the sin against the Holy Ghost. There is one other sin for which Christ never made atonement. Mention every crime in the calendar of evil, and I will show you persons who have found forgiveness for it. But ask me whether the man who died in unbelief can be saved, and I reply there is no atonement for that man. There is an atonement made for the unbelief of a Christian, because it is temporary; but the final unbelief — the unbelief with which men die — never was atoned for. You may turn over this whole Book, and you will find that there is no atonement for the man who died in unbelief; there is no mercy for him. Had he been guilty of every other sin, if he had but believed, he would have been pardoned; but this is the damning exception — he had no faith. Devils seize him! O fiends of the pit, drag him downward to his doom! He is faithless and unbelieving, and such are the tenants for whom hell was built. It is *their* portion, *their*

prison, they are the chief prisoners, the fetters are marked with their names, and for ever shall they know that, “he that believeth not shall be damned.”

II. This brings us now to conclude with the PUNISHMENT.

“Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.” Listen unbelievers! ye have heard this morning your sin; now listen to your doom: “Ye shall see it with your eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.” It is so often with God’s saints. When they are unbelieving, they see the mercy with their eyes, but do not eat it. Now, here is corn in this land of Egypt; but there are some of God’s saints who come here on the Sabbath, and say, “I do not know whether the Lord will be with me or not.” Some of them say, “Well, the gospel is preached, but I do not know whether it will be successful.” They are always doubting and fearing. Listen to them when they get out of the chapel. “Well, did you get a good meal this morning?” “Nothing for me.” Of course not. Ye could see it with your eyes, but did not eat it, because you had no faith. If you had come up with faith, you would have had a morsel. I have found Christians, who have grown so very critical, that if the whole portion of the meat they are to have, in due season, is not cut up exactly into square pieces, and put upon some choice dish of porcelain, they cannot eat it. Then they ought to go without; and they will have to go without, until they are brought to their appetites. They will have some affliction, which will act like quinine upon them: they will be made to eat by means of bitters in their mouths; they will be put in prison for a day or two until their appetite returns, and then they will be glad to eat the most ordinary food, off the most common platter, or no platter at all. But the real reason why God’s people do not feed under a gospel ministry, is, because they have not faith. If you believed, if you did but hear one promise, that would be enough; if you only heard one good thing from the pulpit here would be food for your soul, for it is not the quantity we hear, but the quantity we believe, that does us good — it is that which we receive into our hearts with true and lively faith, that is our profit.

But, let me apply this chiefly to the unconverted. They often see great works of God done with their eyes, but they do not eat thereof. A crowd of people have come here this morning to see with their eyes, but I doubt whether all of them eat. Men cannot eat with their eyes, for if they could,

most would be well fed. And, spiritually, persons cannot feed simply with their ears, nor simply with looking at the preacher; and so we find the majority of our congregations come just to see; “Ah, let us hear what this babbler would say, this reed shaken in the wind.” But they have no faith; they come, and they see, and see, and see, and never eat. there is some one in the front there, who gets converted; and some one down below, who is called by sovereign grace; some poor sinner is weeping under a sense of his blood-guiltiness; another is crying for mercy to God: and another is saying, “Have mercy upon me, a sinner.” A great work is going on in this chapel, but some of you do not know anything about it; you have no work going on in your hearts, and why? Because ye think it is impossible; ye think God is not at work. He has not promised to work for you who do not honor him. Unbelief makes you sit here in times of revival and of the outpouring of God’s grace, unmoved, uncalled, unsaved.

But, sirs, the worst fulfillment of this doom is to come! Good Whitefield used sometimes to lift up both his hands and shout, as I wish I could shout, but my voice fails me. “The wrath to come! the wrath to come!” It is not the wrath now you have to fear, but the wrath to come; and there shall be a doom to come, when “ye shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof.” Methinks I see the last great day. The last hour of time has struck. I heard the bell toll its death knell — time was, eternity is ushered in; the sea is boiling; the waves are lit up with supernatural splendour. I see a rainbow — a flying cloud, and on it there is a throne, and on that throne sits one like unto the Son of Man. I know him. In his hand he holds a pair of balances; just before him the books, — the book of life, the book of death, the book of remembrance. I see his splendour, and I rejoice at it; I behold his pompous appearance, and I smile with gladness that he is come to be “admired of all his saints.” But there stands a throng of miserable wretches, crouching in horror to conceal themselves, and yet looking, for their eyes must look on him whom they have pierced; but when they look they cry, “Hide me from the face.” What face? “Rocks, hide me from the face.” What face? “The face of Jesus, the man who died, but now is come to judgment.” But ye cannot be hidden from his face; ye must see it with your eyes: but ye will not sit on the right hand, dressed in robes of grandeur; and when the triumphal procession of Jesus in the clouds shall come, ye shall not march in it; ye shall see it, but ye shall not be there. Oh! methinks I see it now, the mighty Saviour in his chariot,

riding on the rainbow to heaven. See how his mighty coursers make the sky rattle while he drives them up heaven's hill. A train girt in white follow behind him, and at his chariot wheels he drags the devil, death, and hell. Hark, how they clap their hands. Hark, how they shout. "Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led captivity captive." Hark, how they chant the solemn lay, "Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." See the splendour of their appearance; mark the crown upon their brows; see their snow-white garments; mark the rapture of their countenances; hear how their song swells up to heaven while the Eternal joins therein, saying, "I will rejoice over them with joy, I will rejoice over them with singing, for I have betrothed thee unto me in everlasting lovingkindness." But where are you all the while? Ye can see them up there, but where are you? Looking at it with your eyes, but you cannot eat thereof. The marriage banquet is spread; the good old wines of eternity are broached; they sit down to the feast of the king; but there are you, miserable, and famishing, and ye cannot eat thereof. Oh! how ye wring your hands. Might ye but have one morsel from the table — might ye but be dogs beneath the table. You shall be a dog in hell, but not a dog in heaven.

But to conclude. Methinks I see thee in some place in hell, tied to a rock, the vulture of remorse gnawing thy heart; and up there is Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. You lift up your eyes and you see who it is. "That is the poor man who lay on my dunghill, and the dogs licked his sores; there he is in heaven, while I am cast down. Lazarus — yes, it is Lazarus; and I who was rich in the world of time am here in hell. Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue." But no! it cannot be; it cannot be. And whilst you lie there, if there be one thing in hell worse than another, it will be seeing the saints in heaven. Oh, to think of seeing my mother in heaven while I am cast out! Oh, sinner, only think, to see thy brother in heaven — he who was rocked in the selfsame cradle, and played beneath the same roof-tree — yet thou art cast out. And, husband, there is thy wife in heaven, and thou art amongst the damned. And seest thou; father! thy child is before the throne; and thou! accursed of God and accursed of man, art in hell. Oh, the hell of hells will be to see our friends in heaven, and ourselves lost. I beseech you, my hearers, by the death of Christ — by his agony and bloody sweat — by his cross and passion — by all that is holy — by all that is sacred in heaven and earth — by all that is solemn in time or eternity — by all that

is horrible in hell, or glorious in heaven — by that awful thought, “for ever,” — I beseech you lay these things to heart, and remember that if you are damned, it will be unbelief that damns you. If you are lost, it will be because ye believed not on Christ; and if you perish, this shall be the bitterest drop of gall — that ye did not trust in the Saviour.

THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT

THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY GHOST

A Sermon

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 21, 1855, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

— John 14:16-17

You will be surprised to hear me announce that I do not intend this morning to say anything about the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. I propose to reserve that for another discourse. In this discourse I shall endeavor to explain and enforce certain other doctrines, which I believe are plainly taught in this text, and which I hope God the Holy Ghost may make profitable to our souls. Old John Newton once said, that there were some books which he could not read — they were good and sound enough; but, said he, “they are books of halfpence; you have to take so much in quantity before you have any value; there are other books of silver and others of gold, but I have one book that is a book of bank-notes; and every leaf is a bank-note of immense value.” So, I found with this text, that I had a bank-note of so large a sum that I could not tell it out all this morning. I should have to keep you several hours before I could unfold to you the whole value of this precious promise, one of the last which Christ gave his people.

I invite your attention to this passage because we shall find in it some instruction on four points: first, concerning the true and proper

personality of the Holy Ghost; secondly, concerning the united agency of the glorious Three Persons in the work of our salvation; thirdly we shall find something to establish the doctrine of the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost in the souls of all believers; and, fourthly, we shall find out the reason why the carnal mind rejects the Holy Ghost.

I. First of all, we shall have some little instruction concerning the proper *personality of the Holy Spirit*. We are so much accustomed to talk about the influence of the Holy Ghost and his sacred operations and graces, that we are apt to forget that the Holy Spirit is truly and actually a person — that he is a subsistence — an existence; or, as we Trinitarians usually say, one person in the essence of the Godhead. I am afraid that, though we do not know it, we have acquired the habit of regarding the Holy Ghost as an emanation flowing from the Father and the Son, but not as being actually a person himself. I know it is not easy to carry about in our mind the idea of the Holy Spirit as a person. I can think of the Father as a person, because his acts are such as I can understand. I see him hang the world in ether; I behold him swaddling a new-born sea in bands of darkness; I know it is he who formed the drops of hail, who leadeth forth the stars by their hosts, and calleth them by their name; I can conceive of him as a person, because I behold his operations. I can realize Jesus, the Son of Man, as a real person, because he is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. It takes no great stretch of my imagination to picture the babe in Bethlehem, or behold the “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” of the king of martyrs, as he was persecuted in Pilate’s hall, or nailed to the accursed tree for our sins. Nor do I find it difficult at times to realize the person of my Jesus sitting on his throne in heaven; or girt with clouds and wearing the diadem of all creation, calling the earth to judgment, and summoning us to hear our final sentence. But, when I come to deal with the Holy Ghost, his operations are so mysterious, his doings are so secret, his acts are so removed from everything that is of sense, and of the body, that I cannot so easily get the idea of his being a person; but a person he is. God the Holy Ghost is not an influence, an emanation, a stream of something flowing from the Father; but he is as much an actual person as either God the Son, or God the Father. I shall attempt this morning a little to establish the doctrine, and to show you the truth of it — that God the holy Spirit is actually a person.

The first proof we shall gather from the pool of holy baptism. Let me take you down, as I have taken others, into the pool now concealed, but which I wish were always open to your view. Let me take you to the baptismal font, where believers put on the name of the Lord Jesus, and you shall hear me pronounce the solemn words, “I baptize thee in the name, “ — mark, “in the name,” not names — “of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Every one who is baptized according to the true form laid down in Scripture, must be a Trinitarian: otherwise his baptism is a farce and a lie, and he himself is found a deceiver and a hypocrite before God. As the Father is mentioned, and as the Son is mentioned, so is the Holy Ghost; and the whole is summed up as being a Trinity in unity, by its being said, not the names, but the “name,” the glorious name, the Jehovah name, “of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Let me remind you that the same thing occurs each time you are dismissed from this house of prayer. In pronouncing the solemn closing benediction, we involve on your behalf the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; and thus, according to the apostolic manner, we make a manifest distinction between the persons, showing that we believe the Father to be a person, the Son to be a person, and the Holy Ghost to be a person. Were there no other proofs in Scripture, I think these would be sufficient for every sensible man. he would see that if the Holy Spirit were a mere influence, he would not be mentioned in conjunction with two, whom we all confess to be actual and proper persons.

A second argument arises from the fact that the Holy Ghost has actually made different appearances on earth. The Great Spirit has manifested himself to man: he has put on a form, so that, whilst he has not been beheld by mortal men, he has been so veiled in an appearance that he was seen, so far as that appearance was concerned, by the eyes of all beholders. See you Jesus Christ our Saviour? There is the river Jordan, with its shelving banks and its willows weeping at its side. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, descends into the stream, and the holy Baptist John plunges him into the waves. The doors of heaven are opened; a miraculous appearance presents itself; a bright light shineth from the sky, brighter than the sun in all its grandeur, and down in a flood of glory descends something which you recognize to be a dove. It rests on Jesus — it sits upon his sacred head, and as the old painters put a halo round the brow of Jesus, so did the

Holy Ghost shed a resplendence around the face of him who came to fulfill all righteousness, and there fore commenced with the ordinance of baptism. The Holy Ghost was seen as a dove, to mark his purity and his gentleness, and he came down like a dove *from heaven* to show that it is from heaven alone that he descendeth. Nor is this the only time when the Holy Ghost has been manifest in a visible shape. You see that company of disciples gathered together in an upper room; they are waiting for some promised blessing, and bye-and-bye it shall come. Hark! there is a sound as of a rushing, mighty wind; it fills all the house where they are sitting, and astonished, they look around them, wondering what will come next. Soon a bright light appears, shining upon the heads of each: cloven tongues of fire sat upon them. What were these marvelous appearances of wind and flame but a display of the Holy Ghost in his proper person? I say the fact of an appearance manifests that he must be a person. An influence could not appear — an attribute could not appear: we cannot see attributes — we cannot behold influences. The Holy Ghost must, then, have been a person; since he was beheld by mortal eyes, and he came under the cognizance of mortal sense.

Another proof is from the fact, that the personal qualities are in Scripture ascribed to the Holy Ghost. First, let me read to you a text in which the Holy Ghost is spoken of as having *understanding*. In the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. ii., you will read, “But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepare for them that love him.” But God have revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Here you see an understanding — a power of knowledge is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Now, if there be any persons here whose minds are of so preposterous a complexion that they would ascribe on attribute to another, and would speak of a mere influence having understanding, then I give up all the argument. But I believe every rational man will admit, that when anything is spoken of as having an understanding, it must be an existence — it must, in fact, be a person. In the 12th chapter, v. 10, of the same Epistle, you will find a *will* ascribed to the Holy Spirit. “But all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” So it is plain that the Spirit has

a will. he does not come from God simply at God's will, but he has a will of his own, which is always in keeping with the will of the infinite Jehovah, but is, nevertheless, distinct and separate; therefore, I say he is a person. In another text, *power* is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, and power is a thing which can only be ascribed to an existence. In Rom. xv: 13, it is written, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." I need not insist upon it, because it is self-evident, that wherever you find understanding, will, and power, you must also find an existence; it cannot be a mere attribute, it cannot be a metaphor, it cannot be a personified influence; but it must be a person.

But I have a proof, which, perhaps, will be more telling upon you than any other. Acts and deeds are ascribed to the Holy Ghost; there fore, he must be a person. You read in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, that the Spirit brooded over the surface of the earth, when it was as yet all disorder and confusion. This world was once a mass of chaotic matter, there was no order; it was like the valley of darkness and of the shadow of death. God the Holy Ghost spread his wings over it; he sowed the seeds of life in it; the germs from which all beings sprang were implanted by him; he impregnated the earth so that it became capable of life. Now, it must have been a person who brought order out of confusion: it must have been an existence who hovered over this world and made it what it now is. But do we not read in Scripture something more of the Holy Ghost? Yes, we are told that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." When Moses penned the Pentateuch, the Holy Ghost moved his hand; when David wrote the Psalms, and discoursed sweet music on his harp, it was the Holy Spirit that gave his fingers their seraphic motion; when Solomon dropped from his lips the words of the proverbs of wisdom, or when he hymned the Canticles of love, it was the Holy Ghost who gave him the words of knowledge and hymns of rapture. Ah! and what fire was that which touched the lips of the eloquent Isaiah? What hand was that which came upon Daniel? What might was that which made Jeremiah so plaintive in his grief? or what was that which winged Ezekiel and made him, like an eagle, soar into mysteries aloft, and see the Mighty Unknown beyond our reach? Who was it that made Amos, the herdsman, a prophet? who taught the rugged Haggai to pronounce his thundering sentences? who showed Habakkuk the horses of Jehovah marching through the waters? or

who kindled the burning eloquence of Nahum? who caused Malachi to close up the book with the muttering of the word curse? Who was it in each of these save the Holy Ghost? and must it not have been a person who spake in and through these ancient witnesses? We must believe it. We cannot avoid believing it when we read that “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

And when has the holy Ghost ceased to have an influence upon men? We find that still he deals with his ministers and with all his saints. Turn to the Acts, and you will find that the Holy Ghost said, “Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work.” I never heard of an attribute saying such a thing. The Holy Spirit said to Peter, “Go to the Centurion, and what I have cleansed, that call not thou common.” The Holy Ghost caught away Philip after he had baptized the Eunuch, and carried him away to another place; and the Holy Ghost said to Paul; “Thou shalt not go into that city, but shall turn into another.” And we know that the Holy Ghost was lied unto by Ananias and Sapphira, when it was said, “Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God.” Again, that power which we feel every day, who are called to preach — that wondrous spell which makes our lips so potent — that power which gives us thoughts which are like birds from a far-off region, not the natives of our soul — that influence which I sometimes strangely feel, which, if it does not give me poetry and eloquence, gives me a might I never felt before, and lifts me above my fellow-man — that majesty with which he clothes his ministers, till in the midst of the battle they cry aha! like the war-horse of Job, and move themselves like leviathans in the water — that power which gives us might over men, and causes them to sit and listen as if their ears were chained, as if they were entranced by the power of some magician’s wand — that power must come from a person; it must come from the Holy Ghost.

But is it not said in Scripture, and do we not feel it, dear brethren, that it is the Holy Ghost who regenerates the soul? It is the Holy Ghost who quickens us. “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” It is the Holy Spirit who imparts the first germ of life, convincing us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. And is it not the Holy Spirit, who, after that flame is kindled, still fans it with the breath of his mouth and keeps it alive? Its author is its preserver. Oh! can it be said that it is the Holy Ghost who strives in men’s souls; that it is the Holy Ghost

who brings them into the sweet place that is called Calvary — can it be said that he does all these things, and yet is not a person? It may be said, but it must be said by fools; for he never can be a wise man who can consider these things can be done by any other than a glorious person — a divine existence.

Allow me to give you one more proof, and I shall have done. Certain feelings are ascribed to the Holy Ghost, which can only be understood upon the supposition that he is actually a person. In the 4th chapter of Ephesians, v. 30, it is said that the Holy Ghost can be grieved: “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of Go, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” In Isaiah, chap. lxiii, v. 10, it is said that the Holy Ghost can be vexed: “But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy., and he fought against them.” In Acts, chap. vii. v. 51, you read that the Holy Ghost can be resisted: “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.” And in the 5th chapter, v. 9, of the same book, you will find that the Holy Ghost may be tempted. We are informed that Peter said to Ananias and Sapphira, “How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” Now, these things could not be emotions which might be ascribed to a quality or an emanation; they must be understood to relate to a person; an influence could not be grieved, it must be a person who can be grieved, vexed, or resisted.

And now, dear brethren, I think I have fully established the point of the personality of the Holy Ghost; allow me now, most earnestly, to impress upon you the absolute necessity of being sound on the doctrine of the Trinity. I knew a man, a good minister of Jesus Christ he is now, and I believe he was before he turned his eyes unto heresy — he began to doubt the glorious divinity of our blessed Lord, and for years did he preach the heterodox doctrine, until one day he happened to hear a very eccentric old minister preaching from the text, “But there the *glorious Lord* shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail.” “Now,” said the old minister, “you give up the Trinity, and your tacklings are loosed, you cannot strengthen your masts. Once give up the doctrine of three persons, and your tacklings are all gone; your mast, which ought to

be a support to your vessel, is a rickety one, and shakes.” A gospel without the Trinity! it is a pyramid built upon its apex. A gospel without the Trinity! it is a rope of sand that cannot hold together. A gospel without the Trinity! then, indeed, Satan can overturn it. But give me a gospel with the Trinity, and the might of hell cannot prevail against it; no man can any more overthrow it than a bubble could split a rock, or a feather break in halves a mountain. Get the thought of the three persons, and you have the marrow of all divinity. Only know the Father, and know the Son, and know the Holy Ghost to be one, and all things will appear clear. This is the golden key to the secrets of nature; this is the silken clue of the labyrinths of mystery, and he who understands this, will soon understand as much as mortals e’er can know.

II. Now for our second point — the *united agency* of the three persons in the work of our salvation. Look at the text, and you will find all the three persons mentioned. “I” — that is the Son — “will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.” There are the three persons mentioned, all of them doing something for our salvation. “I will pray,” says the Son. “I will send,” says the Father. “I will comfort,” says the Holy Ghost. now, let us, for a few moments, discourse upon this wondrous theme — the unity of the three persons with regard to the great purpose of the salvation of the elect. When God first made man, he said, “Let *us* make man,” not let *me*, but, “Let us make man in our own image.” The covenant Elohim said to each other, “Let us unitedly become the creator of man.” So, when in ages far gone by, in eternity, they said, “Let us save man:” it was not the Father who said, “Let *me* save man, “but the three persons conjointly said, with one consent, “Let *us* save man.” It is to me a source of sweet comfort to think that it is not one person of the Trinity that is engaged for my salvation; it is not simply one person of the Godhead who vows that he will redeem me; but it is a glorious trio of Godlike ones, and the three declare, unitedly, “*We* will save man.”

Now, observe here, that each person is spoken of as performing a separate office. “I will pray,” says the Son; that is intercession. “I will send,” says the Father; that is donation. “I will comfort,” says the Holy Spirit; that is supernatural influence. O! if it were possible for us to see the three persons of the Godhead, we should behold one of them standing before the throne, with outstretched hands, crying day and night, “O, Lord, how

long?" We should see one girt with Urim and Thummim, precious stones, on which are written the twelve names of the tribes of Israel; we should behold him, crying unto his Father, "Forget not thy promises, forget not thy covenant;" we should hear him make mention of our sorrows, and tell forth our griefs on our behalf, for he is our intercessor. And could we behold the Father, we should not see him a listless and idle spectator of the intercession of the Son, but we should see him with attentive ear listening to every word of Jesus, and granting every petition. Where is the Holy Spirit all the while? Is he lying idle? O no; he is floating over the earth, and when he sees a weary soul, he says, "Come to Jesus, he will give you rest;" when he beholds an eye filled with tears, he wipes away the tears, and bids the mourner look for comfort on the cross; when he sees the tempest-tossed believer, he takes the helm of his soul and speaks the word of consolation; he helpeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds; and, ever on his mission of mercy, he flies around the world, being everywhere present. Behold, how the three persons work together. Do not then say, "I am grateful to the Son" — so you ought to be, but God the Son no more saves you than God the Father. Do not imagine that God the Father is a great tyrant, and that God the Son had to die to make him merciful. It was not to make the Father's love towards his people. Oh, no. One loves as much as the other; the three are conjoined in the great purpose of rescuing the elect from damnation.

But you must notice another thing in my text, which will show the blessed unity of the three — the one person promises to the other. The Son says, "I will pray the Father." "Very well," the disciples may have said, "we can trust you for that." "And he will send you." You see, here is the Son signing a bond on behalf of the Father. "He will send you another Comforter." There is a bond on behalf of the Holy Spirit too. "And he will abide with you forever." One person speaks for the other, and how could they, if there were any disagreement between them? If one wished to save, and the other not, they could not promise on another's behalf. But whatever the Son says, the Father listens to; whatever the Father promises, the Holy Ghost works; and, whatever the Holy Ghost injects into the soul, that God the Father fulfills. So, the three together mutually promise on one another's behalf. There is a bond with three names appended — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. By three immutable things, as

well as by two, the Christian is secured beyond the reach of death and hell. A Trinity of securities, because there is a Trinity of God.

III. Our third point is, the *indwelling* of the Holy Ghost in believers. Now, beloved, these first two things have been matters of pure doctrine; this is the subject of experience. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost I a subject so profound, and so having to do with the inner man, that no soul will be able truly and really to comprehend what I say, unless it has been taught of God. I have heard of an old minister, who told a fellow of one of the Cambridge colleges, that he understood a language that *he* never learned in all his life. “I have not,” he said, “even a smattering of Greek, and I know no Latin, but thank God, I can talk the language of Canaan, and that is more than you can.” So, beloved, I shall now have to talk a little of the language of Canaan. If you cannot comprehend me, I am much afraid it is because you are not of Israelitish extraction; you are not a child of God, nor an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

We are told in the text, that Jesus would send the Comforter, who would abide in the saints forever; who would dwell with them, and be in them. Old Ignatius, the martyr, used to call himself Theophorus, or Godbearer, “because,” said he, “I bear about with me the Holy Ghost.” And truly every Christian is a Godbearer. “Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost? for he dwelleth in you.? That man is no Christian who is not the subject of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; he may talk well, he may understand theology, and be a sound Calvinist; he will be the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child. He may be a man of so profound an intellect, so gigantic a soul, so comprehensive a mind, and so lofty an imagination, that he may dive into all the secrets of nature, may know the path which the eagle’s eye hath not seen, and go into depths where the ken of mortals reacheth not, but he shall not be a Christian with all his knowledge, he shall not be a son of God with all his researches, unless he understands what it is to have the Holy Ghost dwelling in him and abiding in him; yea, and that for ever.

Some people call this fanaticism, and they say, “You are a Quaker; why not follow George Fox?” Well, we would not mind that much: we would follow any one who followed the Holy Ghost. Even he, with all his eccentricities, I doubt not, was, in many cases, actually inspired by the Holy Spirit; and whenever I find a man in whom there rests the Spirit of

God, the spirit within me leaps to hear the spirit within him, and we feel that we are one. The Spirit of God in one Christian soul recognizes the Spirit in another. I recollect talking with a good man, as I believe he was, who was insisting that it was impossible for us to know whether we had the Holy Spirit within us or not. I should like him to be here this morning, because I would read this verse to him, “But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Ah! you think you cannot tell whether you have the Holy Spirit or not. Can I tell whether I am alive or not? If I were touched by electricity, could I tell whether I was or not? I suppose I should; the shock would be strong enough to make me know where I stood. So, if I have God within me — if I have Deity tabernacled in my breast — if I have God the Holy Ghost resting in my heart, and making a temple of my body, do you think I shall know it? Call it fanaticism if you will, but I trust that there are some of us who know what it is to be always, or generally, under the influence of the Holy Spirit — always in one sense, generally in another. When we have difficulties, we ask the direction of the Holy Ghost. When we do not understand a portion of Holy Scripture, we ask God the Holy Ghost to shine upon us. When we are depressed, the Holy Ghost comforts us. You cannot tell what the wondrous power of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is; how it pulls back the hand of the saint when he would touch the forbidden thing; how it prompts him to make a covenant with his eyes; how it binds his feet, lest they should fall in a slippery way; how it restrains his heart, and keeps him from temptation. O ye, who know nothing of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, despise it not. O despise not the Holy Ghost, for it is the unpardonable sin. “He that speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but he that speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, either in this life, or that which is to come.” So saith the Word of God. Therefore tremble, lest in anything ye despise the influences of the Holy Spirit.

But before closing this point, there is one little word that pleases me very much, that is “forever.” You knew I should not miss that; you were certain I could not let it go without observation. “Abide with you forever.” I wish I could get an Armenian here to finish my sermon. I fancy I see him taking that word “forever.” He would say, “for — forever;” he would have to stammer and stutter; for he could never get it out all at once. He might stand and pull it about, and at last he would have to say, “The translation

is wrong.” And I suppose the poor man would have to prove that the original was wrong too. Ah! but blessed be God we can read it — “He shall abide with you forever.” Once give me the Holy Ghost, and I shall never lose him till “forever” has run out; till eternity has spun its everlasting rounds.

IV. Now we have to close up with a brief remark on the reason why the world rejects the Holy Ghost. It is said, “Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.” You know what is sometimes meant by “the world” — those whom God in his wondrous sovereignty passed over when he chose his people: the preterite ones; those passed over in God’s wondrous preterition — not the reprobates who were condemned to damnation by some awful decree; but those passed over by God, when he chose out his elect. These cannot receive the Spirit. Again, it means all in a carnal state are not able to procure themselves this divine influence; and, thus it is true, “Whom the world cannot receive.”

The unregenerate world of sinners despises the Holy Ghost, “because it seeth him not.” Yes, I believe this is the great secret why many laugh at the idea of the existence of the Holy Ghost — because they see him not. You tell the worldling, “I have the Holy Ghost within me.” He says, “I cannot see it.” He wants it to be something tangible — a thing he can recognize with his senses. Have you ever heard the argument used by a good old Christian against an infidel doctor? The doctor said there was no soul, and asked, “Did you ever see a soul?” “No,” said the Christian. “Did you ever hear a soul?” “No.” “Did you ever smell a soul?” “No.” “Did you ever taste a soul?” “No.” “Did you ever feel a soul?” “Yes,” said the man — “I feel I have one within me.” “Well,” said the doctor, “there are four senses against one; you only have one on your side.” “Very well,” said the Christian, “Did you ever see a pain?” “No.” “Did you ever hear a pain?” “No.” “Did you ever smell a pain?” “No.” “Did you ever taste a pain?” “No.” “Did you ever feel a pain?” “Yes.” “And that is quite enough, I suppose, to prove there is a pain?” “Yes.” So the worldling says there is no Holy Ghost, because he cannot see it. Well, but we feel it. You say that is fanaticism, and that we never felt it. Suppose you tell me that honey is bitter, I reply, “No, I am sure you cannot have tasted it; taste it and try.” So with the Holy Ghost; if you did but feel his influence, you would no

longer say there is no Holy Spirit, because you cannot see it. Are there not many things, even in nature, which we cannot see? Did you ever see the wind? No; but ye know there is wind, when you behold the hurricane tossing the waves about, and rending down the habitations of men; or when, in the soft evening zephyr, it kisses the flowers, and maketh dew-drops hang in pearly coronets around the rose. Did ye ever see electricity? No; but ye know there is such a thing, for it travels along the wires for thousands of miles, and carries our messages; though you cannot see the thing itself, you know there is such a thing. So you must believe there is a Holy Ghost working in us, both to will and to do, even though it is beyond our senses.

But the last reason why worldly men laugh at the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, is, because they do not know it. If they know it by heartfelt experience and if they recognized its agency in the soul; if they had ever been touched by it; if they had been made to tremble under a sense of sin; if they had had their hearts melted, they would never have doubted the existence of the Holy Ghost.

And now, beloved, it says, “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” We will close up with that sweet recollection — the Holy Ghost dwells in all believers and shall be with them.

One word of comment and advice to the saints of God, and to sinners, and I have done. Saints of the Lord! ye have this morning heard that God the Holy Ghost is a person; ye have had it proved to your souls. What follows from this? Why, it followeth how earnest ye should be in prayer *to* the Holy Spirit, as well as *for* the Holy Spirit. Let me say that this is an inference that you should lift up your prayers to the Holy Ghost: that you should cry earnestly unto him; for he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you can speak or think. See this mass of people. What is to convert it? See this crowd? Who is to make my influence permeate through the mass? You know this place now has a mighty influence, and, God blessing us, it will have an influence not only upon this city, but upon England at large; for we now employ the press as well as the pulpit; and certainly, I should say, before the close of the year, more than two hundred thousand of my productions will be scattered through the land — words uttered by my lips, or written by my pen. But how can this influence be rendered for good? How shall God’s glory be promoted by it?

Only by incessant prayer for the Holy Spirit; by constantly calling down the influence of the Holy Ghost upon us; we want him to rest upon every page that is printed, and upon every word that is uttered. Let us then be doubly earnest in pleading with the Holy Ghost, that he would come and own our labors; that the whole church at large may be revived thereby, and not ourselves only, but the whole world share in the benefit.

Then, to the ungodly, I have this one closing word to say. Ever be careful how you speak of the Holy Ghost. I do not know what the unpardonable sin is, and I do not think any man understands it; but it is something like this: "He that speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him." I do not know what that means; but tread carefully! There is danger; there is a pit which our ignorance has covered by sand; tread carefully! you may be in it before the next hour. If there is any strife in your heart to-day, perhaps you will go to the ale-house and forget it. Perhaps there is some voice speaking in your soul, and you will put it away. I do not tell you will be resisting the Holy Ghost, and committing the unpardonable sin; but it is somewhere there. Be very careful. O, there is no crime on earth so black as the crime against the Holy Spirit! Ye may blaspheme the Father, and ye shall be damned for it, unless ye repent; ye may blaspheme the Son, and hell shall be your portion, unless ye are forgiven; but blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and thus saith the Lord: "There is no forgiveness, either in this world nor in the world which is to come." I cannot tell you what it is; I do not profess to understand it; but there it is. It is the danger signal; stop! man, stop! If thou has despised the Holy Spirit — if thou hast laughed at his revelations, and scorned what Christians call his influence, I beseech thee, stop! This morning seriously deliberate. Perhaps some of you have actually committed the unpardonable sin; stop! Let fear stop you; sit down. Do not drive on so rashly as you have done, Jehu! O slacken your reins! Thou who are such a profligate in sin — thou who hast uttered such hard words against the Trinity, stop! Ah! it makes us all stop. It makes us all draw up, and say, "Have I not perhaps so done?" Let us think of this; and let us not at any time stifle either with the words or the acts of God the Holy Ghost.

THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT

SWEET COMFORT FOR FEEBLE SAINTS

A Sermon

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 4, 1855, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory”

— Matthew 12:20

Babbling fame ever loves to talk of one man or another. Some there be whose glory it trumpets forth, and whose honor it extols above the heavens. Some are her favorites, and their names are carved on marble, and heard in every land, and every clime. Fame is not an impartial judge; she has her favorites. Some men she extols, exalts, and almost deifies; others, whose virtues are far greater, and whose characters are more deserving of commendation, she passes by unheeded, and puts the finger of silence on her lips. You will generally find that those persons beloved by fame are men made of brass or iron, and cast in a rough mould. Fame caresseth Caesar, because he ruled the earth with a rod of iron. Fame loves Luther, because he boldly and manfully defied the Pope of Rome, and with knit brow dared laugh at the thunders of the Vatican. Fame admires Knox; for he was stern, and proved himself the bravest of the brave. Generally, you will find her choosing out the men of fire and mettle, who stood before their fellow-creatures fearless of them; men who were made of courage; who were consolidated lumps of fearlessness, and never knew what timidity might be. But you know there is another class of persons equally virtuous, and equally to be esteemed — perhaps even more so — whom

fame entirely forgets. You do not hear her talk of the gentle-minded Melancthon — she says but little of him — yet he did as much, perhaps, in the Reformation, as even the mighty Luther. You do not hear fame talk much of the sweet and blessed Rutherford, and of the heavenly words that distilled from his lips; or of Archbishop Leighton, of whom it was said, that he was never out of temper in his life. She loves the rough granite peaks that defy the storm-cloud: she does not care for the more humble stone in the valley, on which the weary traveller resteth; she wants something bold and prominent; something that courts popularity; something that stands out before the world. She does not care for those who retreat in shade. Hence it is, my brethren, that the blessed Jesus, our adorable Master, has escaped fame. No one says much about Jesus, except his followers. We do not find his name written amongst the great and mighty men; though, in truth, he is the greatest, mightiest, holiest, purest, and best of men that ever lived; but because he was “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,” and was emphatically the man whose kingdom is not of this world; because he had nothing of the rough about him, but was all love; because his words were softer than butter, his utterances more gentle in their flow than oil; because never man spake so gently as this man; therefore he is neglected and forgotten. He did not come to be a conqueror with his sword, nor a Mohammed with his fiery eloquence; but he came to speak with a “still small voice,” that melteth the rocky heart; that bindeth up the broken in spirit, and that continually saith, “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;” “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Jesus Christ was all gentleness; and this is why he has not been extolled amongst men as otherwise he would have been. Beloved! our text is full of gentleness; it seems to have been steeped in love; and I hope I may be able to show you something of the immense sympathy and the mighty tenderness of Jesus, as I attempt to speak from it. There are three things to be noticed: first, *mortal frailty*; secondly, *divine compassion*; and thirdly, *certain triumph* — “till he send forth judgment unto victory.”

I. First, we have before us a view of MORTAL FRAILITY

— bruised reed and smoking flax — two very suggestive metaphors, and very full of meaning. If it were not too fanciful — and if it is I know you will excuse me — I should say that the *bruised reed is an emblem of a*

sinner in the first stage of his conviction. The work of God's Holy Spirit begins with bruising. In order to be saved, the fallow ground must be ploughed up; the hard heart must be broken; the rock must be split in sunder. An old divine says there is no going to heaven without passing hard by the gates of hell — without a great deal of soul-trouble and heart-exercise. I take it then that the bruised reed is a picture of the poor sinner when first God commences his operation upon the soul; he is as a bruised reed, almost entirely broken and consumed; there is but little strength in him. *The smoking flax I conceive to be a backsliding Christian;* one who has been a burning and a shining light in his day, but by neglect of the means of grace, the withdrawal of God's Spirit, and falling into sin, his light is almost gone out — not quite — it never can go out, for Christ saith, "I will not quench it;" but it becomes like a lamp when ill supplied with oil — almost useless. It is not quite extinguished — it smokes — it was a useful lamp once, but now it has become as smoking flax. So I think these metaphors very likely describe the contrite sinner as a bruised reed, and the backsliding Christian as smoking flax. However, I shall not choose to make such a division as that, but I shall put both the metaphors together, and I hope we may fetch out a few thoughts from them.

And first, the encouragement offered in our text applies to *weak ones*. What in the world is weaker than the bruised reed, or the smoking flax? A reed that groweth in the fen or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it, and it snaps; let but the foot of man brush against it and it is bruised and broken; every wind that comes howling across the river makes it shake to and fro, and well nigh tears it up by the roots. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence depends more upon circumstances than a bruised reed. Then look at smoking flax — what is it? It has a spark within it, it is true, but it is almost smothered; an infant's breath might blow it out; or the tears of a maiden quench it in a moment; nothing has a more precarious existence than the little spark hidden in the smoking flax. *Weak things*, you see, are here described. Well, Christ says of them, "The smoking flax I will not quench; the bruised reed I will not break." Let me go in search of the weaklings. Ah! I shall not have to go far. There are many in this house of prayer this morning who are indeed weak. Some of God's children, blessed be his name, are made strong to do mighty works for him; God hath his Samsons here and there who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill; he hath here and there his mighty

Gideons, who can go to the camp of the Midianites, and overthrow their hosts; he hath his mighty men, who can go into the pit in winter, and slay the lions; but the majority of his people are a timid, weak race. They are like the starlings that are frightened at every passer by; a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they fall before it; if trial comes, they are overwhelmed by it; their frail skiff is danced up and down by every wave; and when the wind comes, they are drifted along like a sea-bird on the crest of the billows; weak things, without strength, without force, without might, without power. Ah! dear friends, I know I have got hold of some of your hands now, and your hearts too; for you are saying, “Weak! Ah, that I am. Full often I am constrained to say, I would, but cannot sing; I would, but cannot pray; I would, but cannot believe.” You are saying that you cannot do anything; your best resolves are weak and vain; and when you cry, “My strength renew,” you feel weaker than before. You are weak, are you? Bruised reeds and smoking flax? Blessed be God, this text is for you then. I am glad you can come in under the denomination of weak ones, for here is a promise that he will never break nor quench them, but will sustain and hold them up. I know there are some very strong people here — I mean strong in their own ideas. I often meet with persons who would not confess any such weakness as this. They are strong minds. They say, “Do you think that we go into sin, sir? Do you tell us that our hearts are corrupt? We do not believe any such thing; we are good, and pure, and upright; we have strength and might.” To you I am not preaching this morning; to you I am saying nothing; but take heed — your strength is vanity, your power is a delusion, your might is a lie — for however much you may boast in what you can do, it shall pass away; when you come to the real contest with death, you shall find that you have no strength to grapple with it: when one of these days of strong temptation shall come, it will take hold of you, moral man, and down you will go; and the glorious livery of your morality will be so stained, that though you wash your hands in snow water, and make yourselves never so clean, you shall be so polluted that your own clothes shall abhor you. I think it is a blessed thing to be weak. The weak one is a sacred thing; the Holy Ghost has made him such. Can you say, “No strength have I?” Then this text is for you.

Secondly, the things mentioned in our text are not only weak, but *worthless* things. I have heard of a man who would pick up a pin as he walked along the street, on the principle of economy; but I never yet heard

of a man who would stop to pick up bruised reeds. They are not worth having. Who would care to have a bruised reed — a piece of rush lying on the ground? We all despise it as worthless. And smoking flax, what is the worth of that? It is an offensive and noxious thing; but the worth of it is nothing. No one would give the snap of a finger either for the bruised reed or smoking flax. Well, then, beloved, in our estimation there are many of us who are worthless things. There are some here, who, if they could weigh themselves in the scales of the sanctuary, and put their own hearts into the balance of conscience, would appear to be good for nothing — worthless, useless. There was a time when you thought yourselves to be the very best people in the world — when if any one had said that you had more than you deserved, you would have kicked at it, and said, “I believe I am as good as other people.” You thought yourselves something wonderful — extremely worthy of God’s love and regard; but you now feel yourselves to be worthless. Sometimes you imagine God can hardly know where you are, you are such a despicable creature — so worthless — not worth his consideration. You can understand how he can look upon an animalcule in a drop of water, or upon a grain of dust in the sunbeam, or upon the insect of the summer evening; but you can hardly tell how he can think of you, you appear so worthless — a dead blank in the world, a useless thing. You say, “What good am I? I am doing nothing. As for a minister of the gospel, he is of some service; as for a deacon of the church, he is of some use; as for a Sabbath-school teacher, he is doing some good; but of what service am I?” But you might ask the same question here. What is the use of a bruised reed? Can a man lean upon it? Can a man strengthen himself therewith? Shall it be a pillar in my house? Can you bind it up into the pipes of Pan, and make music come from a bruised reed? Ah! no; it is of no service. And of what use is smoking flax? the midnight traveller cannot be lighted by it; the student cannot read by the flame of it. It is of no use; men throw it into the fire and consume it. Ah! that is how you talk of yourselves. You are good for nothing, so are these things. But Christ will not throw you away because you are of no value. You do not know of what use you may be, and you cannot tell how Jesus Christ values you after all. There is a good woman there, a mother, perhaps, she says, “Well, I do not often go out — I keep house with my children, and seem to be doing no good.” Mother, do not say so, your position is a high, lofty, responsible one; and in training up children for the Lord, you are doing as

much for his name as yon eloquent Apollos, who so valiantly preached the word. And you, poor man, all you can do is to toil from morning till night, and earn just enough to enable you to live day by day, you have nothing to give away, and when you go to the Sabbath-school, you can just read, you cannot teach much — well, but unto him to whom little is given of him little is required. Do you not know that there is such a thing as glorifying God by sweeping the street crossing? If two angels were sent down to earth, one to rule an empire, and the other to sweep a street, they would have no choice in the matter, so long as God ordered them. So God, in his providence, has called you to work hard for your daily bread; do it to his glory. “Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to his honor.” But, ah! I know there are some of you here who seem useless to the Church. You do all you can; but when you have done it, it is nothing; you can neither help us with money, nor talents, nor time, and, therefore, you think God must cast you out. You think if you were like Paul or Peter you might be safe. Ah! beloved, talk not so; Jesus Christ saith he will not quench the useless flax, nor break the worthless bruised reed; he has something for the useless and for the worthless ones. But mark you, I do not say this to excuse laziness — to excuse those that can do, but do not; that is a very different thing. There is a whip for the ass, a scourge for idle men, and they must have it sometimes. I am speaking now of those who cannot do it; not of Issacher, who is like a strong ass, crouching down between two burdens, and too lazy to get up with them. I say nothing for the sluggard, who will not plough by reason of the cold, but of the men and women who really feel that they can be of little service — who cannot do more; and to such, the words of the text are applicable.

Now we will make another remark. The two things here mentioned are *offensive* things. A bruised reed is offensive, for I believe there is an allusion here to the pipes of Pan, which you all know are reeds put together, along which a man moves his mouth, thus causing some kind of music. This is the organ, I believe which Jubal invented, and which David mentions, for it is certain that the organ we use was not then in use. The bruised reed, then, would of course spoil the melody of all the pipes; one unsound tube would so let the air out, as to produce a discordant sound, or no sound at all, so that one’s impulse would be to take the pipe out and put in a fresh one. And, as for smoking flax, the wick of a candle or anything of that kind, I need not inform you that the smoke is offensive.

To me no odour in all the world is so abominably offensive as smoking flax. But some say, “How can you speak in so low a style?” I have not gone lower than I could go myself, nor lower than you can go with me; for I am sure you are, if God the Holy Ghost has really humbled you, just as offensive to your own souls, and just as offensive to God as a bruised reed would be among the pipes, or as smoking flax to the eyes and nose. I often think of dear old John Bunyan, when he said he wished God had made him a toad, or a frog, or a snake, or anything rather than a man, for he felt he was so offensive. Oh! I can conceive a nest of vipers, and I think that they are obnoxious; I can imagine a pool of all kinds of loathsome creatures, breeding corruption, but there is nothing one half so worthy of abhorrence as the human heart. God spares from all eyes but his own that awful sight — a human heart; and could you and I but once see our heart, we should be driven mad, so horrible would be the sight. Do you feel like that? Do you feel that you must be offensive in God’s sight — that you have so rebelled against him, so turned away from his commandments, that surely you must be obnoxious to him? If so, my text is yours.

Now, I can imagine some woman here this morning who has departed from the paths of virtue; and, while she is standing in the throng up there, or sitting down, she feels as if she had no right to tread these hallowed courts, and stand among God’s people. She thinks that God might almost make the chapel break down upon her to destroy her, she is so great a sinner. Never mind, broken reed and smoking flax! Though thou art the scorn of man, and loathsome to thyself, yet Jesus saith to thee, “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” There is some man here who hath something in his heart that I know not of — who may have committed crimes in secret, that we will not mention in public; his sins stick like a leech to him, and rob him of all comfort. Here you are young man, shaking and trembling, lest your crime should be divulged before high heaven; you are broken down, bruised like a reed, smoking like flax. Ah! I have a word for thee too. Comfort! comfort! comfort! Despair not; for Jesus saith he will not quench the smoking flax, he will not break the bruised reed.

And yet, my dear friends, there is one thought before I turn away from this point. Both of these articles, however worthless they may be, *may yet be of some service*. When God puts his hand to a man, if he were

worthless and useless before, he can make him very valuable. You know the price of an article does not depend so much upon the value of the raw material to begin with — bruised reeds and smoking flax; but by Divine workmanship both these things become of wondrous value. You tell me the bruised reed is good for nothing; I tell you that Christ will take that bruised reed and mend it up, and fit it in the pipes of heaven. Then when the grand orchestra shall send forth its music, when the organs of the skies shall peal forth their deep-toned sounds, we shall ask, “What was that sweet note heard there, mingling with the rest?” And some one shall say, “It was a bruised reed.” Ah! Mary Magdalene’s voice in heaven, I imagine, sounds more sweet and liquid than any other; and the voice of that poor thief, who said “Lord, remember me,” if it is a deep bass voice, is more mellow and more sweet than the voice of any other, because he loved much, for he had much forgiven him. This reed may yet be of use. Do not say you are good for nothing; you shall sing up in heaven yet. Do not say you are worthless; at last you shall stand before the throne among the blood-washed company, and shall sing God’s praise. Ay! and the smoking flax too, what good can that be? I will soon tell you. There is a spark in that flax somewhere; it is nearly out, but still a spark remaineth. Behold the prairie on fire! See you the flames come rolling on? See you stream after stream of hot fire deluging the plain till all the continent is burnt and scorched — till heaven is reddened with the flame. Old night’s black face is scarred with the burning, and the stars appear affrighted at the conflagration. How was that mass ignited? By a piece of smoking flax dropped by some traveller, fanned by the soft wind, till the whole prairie caught the flame. So one poor man, one ignorant man, one weak man, even one backsliding man, may be the means of the conversion of a whole nation. Who knows but that you who are nothing now, may be of more use than those of us who appear to stand better before God, because we have more gifts and talents? God can make a spark set a world on fire — he can light up a whole nation with the spark of one poor praying soul. You may be useful yet; therefore be of good cheer. Moss groweth upon gravestones; the ivy clingeth to the mouldering pile; the mistletoe groweth on the dead branch; and even so shall grace, and piety, and virtue, and holiness, and goodness, come from smoking flax and bruised reeds.

II. Thus, then, my dear friends, I have tried to find out the parties for whom this text is meant, and I have shown you somewhat of mortal frailty;

Now I mount a step higher — to DIVINE COMPASSION.

“The bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench.”

Notice what is first of all stated, and then let me tell you that Jesus Christ means a great deal more than he says. First of all, what does he say? He says plainly enough that he will not break the bruised reed. There is a bruised reed before me — a poor child of God under a deep sense of sin. It seems as if the whip of the law would never stop. It keeps on, lash, lash, lash; and though you say, “Lord, stop it, and give me a little respite,” still comes down the cruel thong, lash, lash, lash. You feel your sins. Ah! I know what you are saying this morning: “If God continues this a little longer my heart will break: I shall perish in despair; I am almost distracted by my sin; if I lie down at night I cannot sleep; it appears as if ghosts were in the room — ghosts of my sins — and when I awake at midnight, I see the black form of death staring at me, and saying, ‘Thou art my prey, I shall have thee;’ while hell behind seems to burn.” Ah! poor bruised reed, he will not break you; conviction shall be too strong; it shall be great enough to melt thee, and to make thee go to Jesus’ feet; but it shall not be strong enough to break thy heart altogether, so that thou shouldst die. Thou shalt never be driven to despair; but thou shalt be delivered; thou shalt come out of the fire, poor bruised reed, and shalt not be broken.

So there is a backslider here this morning; he is like the smoking flax. Years gone by you found such happiness in the ways of the Lord, and such delight in his service, that you said, “There I would for ever stay.

‘What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.’”

You are smoking, and you think God will put you out. If I were an Arminian, I should tell you that he would; but being a believer in the Bible, and nothing else, I tell you that he will not quench you. Though you are smoking, you shall not die. Whatever your crime has been, the Lord says,

“Return ye backsliding children of men, for I will have mercy upon you.” He will not cast thee away, poor Ephriam; only come back to him — he will not despise thee, though thou hast plunged thyself in the mire and dirt, though thou art covered from head to foot with filthiness; come back, poor prodigal, come back, come back! Thy father calls thee. Hearken poor backslider! Come at once to him whose arms are ready to receive thee.

It says he will not quench — he will not break. But there is more under cover than we see at first sight. When Jesus says he will not break, he means more than that; he means, “I will take that poor bruised reed; I will plant it hard by the rivers of waters, and (miracle of miracles) I will make it grow into a tree whose leaf shall not wither; I will water it every moment; I will watch it; there shall be heavenly fruits upon it; I will keep the birds of prey from it; but the birds of heaven, the sweet songsters of paradise shall make their dwellings in the branches.” When he says that he will not break the bruised reed, he means more; he means that he will nourish, that he will help, and strengthen, and support and glorify — that he will execute his commission on it, and make it glorious for ever. And when he says to the backslider that he will not quench him, he means more than that — he means that he will fan him up to a flame. Some of you, I dare say, have gone home from chapel and found that your fire had gone nearly out; I know how you deal with it; you blow gently at the single spark, if there is one, and lest you should blow too hard, you hold your finger before it; and if you were alone and had but one match, or one spark in the tinder, how gently would you blow it. So, backslider, Jesus Christ deals with thee; he does not put thee out; he blows gently; he says, “I will not quench thee;” he means, “I will be very tender, very cautious, very careful;” he will put on dry material, so that by-and-by a little spark shall come to a flame, and blaze up towards heaven, and great shall be the fire thereof.

Now I want to say one or two things to Little-Faiths this morning. The little children of God who are here mentioned as being bruised reeds or smoking flax are just as safe as the great saints of God. I wish for a moment to expand this thought, and then I will finish with the other head. These saints of God who are called bruised reeds and smoking flax are just as safe as those who are mighty for their Master, and great in strength, for several reasons. First of all, *the little saint is just as much God’s elect as the great saint*. When God chose his people, he chose them all at once, and

altogether; and he elected one just as much as the other. If I choose a certain number of things, one may be less than the rest, but one is as much chosen as the other; and so Mrs. Fearing and Miss Despondency are just as much elected as Great-Heart, or Old Father Honest. Again: *the little ones are redeemed equally with the great ones!* the feeble saints cost Christ as much suffering as the strong ones; the tiniest child of God could not have been purchased with less than Jesus' precious blood; and the greatest child of God did not cost him more. Paul did not cost any more than Benjamin — I am sure he did not — for I read in the Bible that "*there is no difference.*" Besides, when of old they came to pay their redemption-money, every person brought a shekel. The poor shall bring no less, and the rich shall bring no more than just a shekel. The same price was paid for the one as the other. Now then little child of God, take that thought to thy soul. You see some men very prominent in Christ's cause — and it is very good that they should be — but they did not cost Jesus a farthing more than you did; he paid the same price for you that he paid for them. Recollect again, *you are just as much a child of God as the greatest saint.* Some of you have five or six children. There is one child of yours, perhaps, who is very tall and handsome, and has, moreover, gifts of mind; and you have another child who is the smallest of the family, perhaps has but little intellect and understanding. But which is the most your child? "The most!" you say; "both alike are my children, certainly, one as much as the other." And so, dear friends, you may have very little learning, you may be very dark about divine things, you may but "see men as trees walking," but you are as much the children of God as those who have grown to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Then remember, poor tried saint, that *you are just as much justified as any other child of God.* I know that I am completely justified.

His blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.

I want no other garments, save Jesus' doings, and his imputed righteousness.

The boldest child of God wants no more; and I who am "less than the least of all saints," can be content with no less, and I shall have no less. O Ready-to-Halt, thou art as much justified as Paul, Peter, John the Baptist,

or the loftiest saint in heaven. There is no difference in that matter. Oh! take courage and rejoice.

Then one thing more. *If you were lost, God's honor would be as much tarnished as if the greatest one were lost.* A queer thing I once read in an old book about God's children and people being a part of Christ and in union with him. The writer says — "A father sitteth in his room, and there cometh in a stranger; the stranger taketh up a child on his knee, and the child hath a sore finger; so he saith, 'My child, you have a sore finger;' 'Yes!' 'Well, let me take it off, and give thee a golden one!' The child looketh at him and saith, 'I will not go to that man any more, for he talks of taking off my finger; I love my own finger, and I will not have a golden one instead of it.'" So the saint saith, "I am one of the members of Christ, but I am like a sore finger, and he will take me off and put a golden one on." "No," said Christ, "no, no; I cannot have any of my members taken away; if the finger be a sore one, I will bind it up; I will strengthen it." Christ cannot allow a word about cutting his members off. If Christ lose one of his people, he would not be a whole Christ any longer. If the meanest of his children could be cast away, Christ would lack a part of his fullness; yea, Christ would be incomplete without his Church. If one of his children must be lost, it would be better that it should be a great one, than a little one. If a little one were lost, Satan would say, "Ah! you save the great ones, because they had strength and could help themselves; but the little one that has no strength, you could not save him." You know what Satan would say; but God would shut Satan's mouth, by proclaiming, "They are all here, Satan, in spite of thy malice, they are all here; every one is safe; now lie down in thy den for ever, and be bound eternally in chains, and smoke in fire!" So shall *he* suffer eternal torment, but not one child of God ever shall.

One thought more and I shall have done with this head. *The salvation of great saints often depends upon the salvation of little ones.* Do you understand that? You know that my salvation, or the salvation of any child of God, looking at second causes, very much depends upon the conversion of some one else. Suppose your mother is the means of your conversion, you would, speaking after the manner of men, say, that your conversion depended upon hers; for her being converted, made her the instrument of bringing you in. Suppose such-and-such a minister to be the means of your

calling; then your conversion, in some sense, though not absolutely, depends upon his. So it often happens, that the salvation of God's mightiest servants depends upon the conversion of little ones. There is a poor mother; no one ever knows anything about her; she goes to the house of God, her name is not in the newspapers, or anywhere else; she teaches her child, and brings him up in the fear of God; she prays for that boy; she wrestles with God, and her tears and prayers mingle together. The boy grows up. What is he? A missionary — a William Knibb — a Moffat — a Williams. But you do not hear anything about the mother. Ah! but if the mother had not been saved, where would the boy have been? Let this cheer the little ones; and may you rejoice that he will nourish and cherish you, though you are like bruised reeds and smoking flax.

Now, to finish up, there is a CERTAIN VICTORY.

“Till he send forth judgment unto victory.”

Victory! There is something beautiful in that word. The death of Sir John Moore, in the Peninsular war, was very touching; he fell in the arms of triumph; and sad as was his fate, I doubt not that his eye was lit up with lustre by the shout of victory. So also, I suppose, that Wolfe spoke a truth when he said, “I die happy,” having just before heard the shout, “they run, they run.” I know victory even in that bad sense — for I look not upon earthly victories as of any value — must have cheered the warrior. But oh! how cheered the saint when he knows that victory is his! I shall fight during all my life, but I shall write “*vici*” on my shield. I shall be “more than conqueror through him that loved me.” Each feeble saint shall win the day; each man upon his crutches; each lame one; each one full of infirmity, sorrow, sickness, and weakness, shall gain the victory. “They shall come with singing unto Zion; as well the blind, and lame, and halt, and the woman with child, together.” So saith the Scripture. Not one shall be left out; but he shall “send forth judgment unto victory.” Victory! victory! victory! This is the lot of each Christian; he shall triumph through his dear Redeemer's name.

Now a word about this victory. I speak first to aged men and women. Dear brethren and sisters, you are often, I know, like the bruised reed. Coming events cast their shadows before them; and death casts the shadow of old age on you. You feel the grasshopper to be a burden; you feel full of

weakness and decay; your frame can hardly hold together. Ah! you have here a special promise. "The bruised reed I will not break." "I will strengthen thee." "When thy heart and thy flesh faileth, I will be the strength of thy heart and thy portion for ever."

Even down to old age, all my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.

Tottering on thy staff, leaning, feeble, weak, and wan; fear not the last hour; that last hour shall be thy best; thy last day shall be a consummation devoutly to be wished. Weak as thou art, God will temper the trial to thy weakness; he will make thy pain less, if thy strength be less; but thou shalt sing in heaven, Victory! victory! victory! There are some of us who could wish to change places with you, to be so near heaven — to be so near home. With all your infirmities, your grey hairs are a crown of glory to you; for you are near the end as well as in the way of righteousness.

A word with you middle-aged men, battling in this life's rough storm. You are often bruised reeds, your religion is so encumbered by your worldly callings, so covered up by the daily din of business, business, business, that you seem like smoking flax; it is as much as you can do to serve your God, and you cannot say that you are "fervent in spirit" as well as "diligent in business." Man of business, toiling and striving in this world, he will not quench thee when thou art like smoking flax; he will not break thee when thou art like the bruised reed, but will deliver thee from thy troubles, thou shalt swim across the sea of life, and shalt stand on the happy shore of heaven, and shalt sing, "Victory" through him that loved thee.

Ye youths and maidens! I speak to you, and have a right to do so. You and I oftentimes know what the bruised reed is, when the hand of God blights our fair hopes. We are full of giddiness and waywardness, it is only the rod of affliction that can bring folly out of us, for we have much of it in us. Slippery paths are the paths of youths, and dangerous ways are the ways of the young, but God will not break or destroy us. Men, by their over caution, bid us never tread a step lest we fall; but God bids us go, and makes our feet like hind's feet that we may tread upon high places. Serve

God in early days; give your hearts to him, and then he will never cast you out, but will nourish and cherish you.

Let me not finish without saying a word to little children. You who have never heard of Jesus, he says to you, "The bruised reed I will not break; the smoking flax I will not quench." I believe there is many a little prattler, not six years old, who knows the Saviour. I never despise infantile piety; I love it. I have heard little children talk of mysteries that grey-headed men knew not. Ah! little children who have been brought up in the Sabbath-schools, and love the Saviour's name, if others say you are too forward, do not fear, love Christ still.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Still will look upon a child;
Pity thy simplicity,
And suffer thee to come to him.

He will not cast thee away; for smoking flax he will not quench, and the bruised reed he will not break.

THE BIBLE**A Sermon**

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, March 18, 1855, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

“I have written to him the great things of my law; but they were counted as a strange thing.”

— Hosea 8:12

This is God’s complaint against Ephraim. It is no mean proof of his goodness, that he stoops to rebuke his erring creatures; it is a great argument of his gracious disposition, that he bows his head to notice terrestrial affairs. He might, if he pleased, wrap himself with might as with a garment; he might put the stars around his wrist for bracelets, and bind the suns around his brow for a coronet; he might dwell alone, far, far above this world, up in the seventh heaven, and look down with calm and silent indifference upon all the doings of his creatures; he might do as the heathens supposed their Jove did, sit in perpetual silence, sometimes nodding his awful head to make the fates move as he pleased, but never taking thought of the little things of earth, disposing of them as beneath his notice, engrossed with his own being, swallowed up within himself, living alone and retired; and I, as one of his creatures, might stand by night upon a mountain-top, and look upon the silent stars and say, “Ye are the eyes of God, but ye look not down on me; your light is the gift of his omnipotence, but your rays are not smiles of love to me. God, the mighty Creator, has forgotten me; I am a despicable drop in the ocean of creation, a sear leaf in the forest of beings, an atom in the mountain of existence. He knows me not; I am alone, alone, alone.” But it is not so, beloved. Our God is of another order. He notices every one of us; there is not a sparrow or a

worm but is found in his decrees. There is not a person upon whom his eye is not fixed. Our most secret acts are known to him. Whatsoever we do, or bear, or suffer, the eye of God still rests upon us, and we are beneath his smile — for we are his people; or beneath his frown — for we have erred from him.

Oh! how ten-thousand-fold merciful is God, that, looking down upon the race of man, he does not smite it out of existence. We see from our text that God looks upon man; for he says of Ephraim, “I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.” But see how, when he observes the sin of man, he does not dash him away and spurn him with his foot; he does not shake him by the neck over the gulf of hell, until his brain doth reel and then drop him forever; but rather, he comes down from heaven to plead with his creatures; he argues with them; he puts himself, as it were, upon a level with the sinner — states his grievances and pleads his claim. O Ephraim, I have written unto thee the great things of my law, but they have been unto thee as a strange thing! I come here to-night in God’s stead, my friends, to plead with you as God’s ambassador, to charge many of you with a sin; to lay it to your hearts by the power of the Spirit, so that you may be convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come. The crime I charge you with is the sin of the text. God has written to you the great things of his law, but they have been unto you as a strange thing. It is concerning this blessed book, the Bible, that I mean to speak tonight. Here lies my text — this Word of God. Here is the theme of my discourse, a theme which demands more eloquence than I possess; a subject upon which a thousand orators might speak at once; a mighty, vast, and comprehensive theme, which might engross all eloquence throughout eternity, and still it would remain unexhausted.

Concerning the Bible, I have three things to say to-night, and they are all in my text. First, its author, “*I have written;*” secondly, its subjects — the great things of God’s law; and thirdly, its common treatment — it has been accounted by most men a strange thing.

I. First, then, concerning this book: Who is *the author*? The text says that it is God. “*I have written to him the great things of my law.*” Here lies my Bible — who wrote it? I open it, and find it consists of a series of tracts. The first five tracts were written by a man called Moses; I turn on, and I

find others. Sometimes I see David is the penman, at other times Solomon. Here I read Micah, then Amos, then Hosea. As I turn further on, to the more luminous pages of the New Testament, I see Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Paul, Peter, James, and others; but when I shut up the book; I ask myself, who is the author of it? Do these men jointly claim the authorship? Are they the compositors of this massive volume? Do they between themselves divide the honor? Our holy religion answers, No! This volume is the writing of the living God; each letter was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips; each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit. Albeit, that Moses was employed to write his histories with his fiery pen, God guided that pen. It may be that David touched his harp, and let sweet Psalms of melody drop from his fingers; but God moved his hands over the living strings of his golden harp. It may be that Solomon sang canticles of love, or gave forth words of consummate wisdom, but God directed his lips, and made the preacher eloquent. If I follow the thundering Nahum, when his horses plough the waters, or Habakkuk, when he sees the tents of Cushan in affliction; if I read Malachi, when the earth is burning like an oven; if I turn to the smooth page of John, who tells of love, or the rugged, fiery chapters of Peter, who speaks of fire devouring God's enemies; if I turn to Jude, who launches forth anathemas upon the foes of God, everywhere I find God speaking; it is God's voice, not man's; the words are God's words, the words of the Eternal, the Invisible, the Almighty, the Jehovah of this earth. This Bible is God's Bible, and when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, "I am the book of God; man, read me. I am God's writing; open my leaf, for I was penned by God; read it, for he is my author, and you will see him visible and manifest everywhere." "I have written to him the great things of my law."

How do you know that God wrote the book? That is just what I shall not try to prove to you. I could if I pleased, demonstrate it, for there are arguments enough, there are reasons enough, did I care to occupy your time to-night in bringing them before you; but I shall do no such thing. I might tell you, if I pleased, that the grandeur of the style is above that of an mortal writing, and that all the poets who have ever existed could not, with all their works united, give us such sublime poetry and such mighty language as is to be found in the Scriptures. I might insist upon it, that the subjects of which it treats are beyond the human intellect; that man could

never have invented the grand doctrines of a Trinity in the Godhead; man could not have told us anything of the creation of the universe; he could never have been the author of the majestic idea of Providence — that all things are ordered according to the will of one great Supreme Being, and work together for good. I might enlarge upon its honesty, since it tells the faults of its writers; its unity, since it never belies itself; its master simplicity, that he who runs may read it; and I might mention a hundred more things, which would all prove, to a demonstration, that the book is of God. But I come not here to prove it. I am a Christian minister, and you are Christians, or profess to be so; and there is never any necessity for Christian ministers to make a point of bringing forward infidel arguments in order to answer them. It is the greatest folly in the world. Infidels, poor creatures, do not know their own arguments till we tell them, and then they glean their blunted shafts to shoot them at the shield of truth again. It is follow to bring forward these firebrands of hell, even if we are well prepared to quench them. Let men of the world learn error of themselves; do not let us be propagators of their falsehoods. True, there are some preachers who are short of stock, and want to fill them up; but God's own chosen men need not do that; they are taught of God, and God supplies them with matter, with language, with power. There may be some one here to-night who has come without faith, a man of reason, a freethinker. With him I have no argument at all. I profess not to stand here as a controversialist, but as a preacher of things that I know and feel. But I too, have been like him. There was an evil hour when I once shipped the anchor of my faith; I cut the cable of my belief; I no longer moored myself hard by the coasts of Revelation; I allowed my vessel to drift before the wind; I said to reason, "Be thou my captain;" I said to my own brain, "Be thou my rudder;" and I started on my mad voyage. Thank God, it is all over now; but I will tell you its brief history. It was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought. I went on, and as I went, the skies began to darken; but to make up for that deficiency, the waters were brilliant with coruscations of brilliancy. I saw sparks flying upward that pleased me, and I thought, "If this be free thought, it is a happy thing." My thoughts seemed gems, and I scattered stars with both my hands; but anon, instead of these coruscations of glory, I saw grim fiends, fierce and horrible, start up from the waters, and as I dashed on, they gnashed their teeth, and grinned upon me; they seized the prow of my ship and dragged

me on, while, in part, gloried at the rapidity of my motion, but yet shuddered at the terrific rate with which I passed the old landmarks of my faith. As I hurried forward, with an awful speed, I began to doubt my very existence; I doubted if there were a world, I doubted if there was such a thing as myself. I went to the very verge of the dreary realms of unbelief. I went to the very bottom of the sea of Infidelity. I doubted everything. But here the devil foiled himself: for the very extravagance of the doubt, proved its absurdity. Just when I saw the bottom of that sea, there came a voice which said, "And can this doubt be true?" At this very thought I awoke. I started from that deathdream, which, God knows might have damned my soul, and ruined this, my body, if I had not awoke. When I arose, faith took the helm; from that moment I doubted not. Faith steered me back; faith cried, "Away, away!" I cast my anchor on Calvary; I lifted my eye to God; and here I am, "alive, and out of hell." Therefore, I speak what I do know. I have sailed that perilous voyage; I have come safe to land. Ask me again to be an infidel! No; I have tried it; it was sweet at first, but bitter afterwards. Now, lashed to God's gospel more firmly than ever, standing as on a rock of adamant, I defy the arguments of hell to move me; for "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." But I shall neither plead nor argue this night. You profess to be Christian men, or else you would not be here. Your professions may be lies; what you say you are, may be the very contrary to what you *really* are; but still I suppose you all admit that this is the Word of God. A thought or two then upon it. "I have written to him the great things of my law."

First, my friends, stand over this volume, and *admire its authority*. This is no common book. It is not the sayings of the sages of Greece; here are not the utterances of philosophers of past ages. If these words were written by a man, we might reject them; but O let me think the solemn thought, that this book is God's handwriting — that these words are God's! Let me look at its date; it is dated from the hills of heaven. Let me look at its letters; they flash glory on my eye. Let me read the chapters; they are big with meaning and mysteries unknown. Let me turn over the prophecies; they are pregnant with unthought-of wonders. Oh, book of books! And wast thou written by my God? Then will I bow before thee. Thou book of vast authority! thou art a proclamation from the Emperor of Heaven; far be it from me to exercise my reason in contradicting thee. Reason, thy

place is to stand and find out what this volume means, not to tell what this book ought to say. Come thou, my reason, my intellect, sit thou down and listen, for these words are the words of God. I do not know how to enlarge on this thought. Oh! if you could ever remember that this Bible was actually and really written by God. Oh! if ye had been let into the secret chambers of heaven, if ye had beheld God grasping his pen and writing down these letters — then surely ye would respect them; but they are just as much God’s handwriting as if you had seen God write them. This Bible is a book of authority; it is an authorized book, for God has written it. Oh! tremble, lest any of you despise it; mark its authority, for it is the Word of God.

Then, since God wrote it, mark *its truthfulness*. If I had written it, there would be worms of critics who would at once swarm upon it, and would cover it with their evil spawn; Had I written it, there would be men who would pull it to pieces at once, and perhaps quite right too. But this is the Word of God; come, search, ye critics, and find a flaw; examine it, from its Genesis to its Revelation, and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed by quartz, or any earthly substance. This is a star without a speck; a sun without a blot; a light without darkness; a moon without its paleness; a glory without a dimness. O Bible! it cannot be said of any other book, that it is perfect and pure; but of thee we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in thee, without a particle of folly. This is the judge that ends the strife, where wit and reason fail. This is the book untainted by any error; but is pure, unalloyed, perfect truth. Why? Because God wrote it. Ah! charge God with error if ye please; tell him that his book is not what it ought to be. I have heard men, with prudish and mock-modesty, who would like to alter the Bible; and (I almost blush to say it) I have heard ministers alter God’s Bible, because they were afraid of it. Have you never heard a man say, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not” — what does the Bible say? — “Shall be *damned*.” But that does not happen to be polite enough, so they say, “Shall be *condemned*.” Gentlemen, pull the velvet out of your mouths; speak God’s word; we want none of your alterations. I have heard men in prayer instead of saying, “Make your calling and *election* sure,” say “Make your calling and *salvation* sure.” Pity they were not born when God lived far — far back that they might have taught God how to write. Oh, impudence beyond all bounds! Oh full-blown self-conceit! To attempt

to dictate to the All-wise — to teach the Omniscient and instruct the Eternal. Strange that there should be men so vile as to use the penknife of Jehoiakim to cut passages out of the word, because they are unpalatable. O ye who dislike certain portions of Holy Writ, rest assured that your taste is corrupt, and that God will not stay for your little opinion. Your dislike is the very reason why God wrote it, because you are not to be suited; you have no right to be pleased. God wrote what you do not like; he wrote the truth. Oh! let us bend in reverence before it, for God inspired it. It is pure truth. Here from this fountain gushes *aqua vitae* — the water of life — without a single particle of earth; here from this sun cometh forth rays of radiance, without the mixture of darkness. Blessed Bible! thou art all truth.

Yet once more, before we leave this point, let us stop and consider *the merciful nature of God*, in having written us a Bible at all. Ah! he might have left us without it, to grope our dark way, as blind men seek the wall; he might have suffered us to wander on with the star of reason as our only guide. I recollect a story of Mr. Hume, who so constantly affirmed that the light of reason is abundantly sufficient. Being at a good minister's house one evening, he had been discussing the question, and declaring his firm belief in the sufficiency of the light of nature. On leaving, the minister offered to hold him a candle to light him down the steps. He said "No; the light of nature would be enough; the moon would do." It so happened that the moon was covered with a cloud, and he fell down the steps. "Ah!" said the minister, "you had better have had a little light from above, after all, Mr. Hume." So, supposing the light of nature to be sufficient, we had better have a little light from above too, and then we shall be sure to be right. Better have two lights than only one. The light of creation is a bright light. God may be seen in the stars; his name is written in gilt letters on the brow of night; you may discover his glory in the ocean waves, yea, in the trees of the field; but it is better to read it in two books than in one. You will find it here more clearly revealed; for he has written this book himself, and he has given you the key to understand it, if you have the Holy Spirit. Ah, beloved, let us thank God for this Bible; let us love it; let us count it more precious than much fine gold.

But let me say one thing, before I pass on to the second point. If this be the Word of God, what will become of some of you who have not read it for the last month? "Month, sir! I have not read it for this year." Ay, there

are some of you who have not read it at all. Most people treat the Bible very politely. They have a small pocket volume, neatly bound; they put a white pocket-handkerchief round it and carry it to their places of worship; when they get home, they lay it up in a drawer till next Sunday morning; then it comes out again for a little bit of a treat, and goes to chapel; that is all the poor Bible gets in the way of an airing. That is your style of entertaining this heavenly messenger. There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write “damnation” with your fingers. There are some of you who have not turned over your Bibles for a long, long while, and what think you? I tell you blunt words, but true words. What will God say at last? When you shall come before him, he shall say, “Did you read my Bible?” “No.” “I wrote you a letter of mercy; did you read it?” “No.” “Rebel! I have sent thee a letter inviting thee to me; didst thou ever read it?” “*Lord, I never broke the seal; I kept it shut up.*” “Wretch!” says God, “then, thou deservest hell, if I sent thee a loving epistle, and thou wouldst not even break the seal; what shall I do unto thee?” Oh, let it not be so with you. Be Bible-readers; be Bible

II. Our second point is: *The subjects on which the Bible treats.* The words of the text are these: “I have written to him the great things of my law.” The Bible treats of great things, and of great things only. there is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning; and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it. You have seen mummies, wrapped round and round with folds of linen. Well, God’s Bible is like that; it is a vast roll of white linen, woven in the loom of truth; so you will have to continue unwinding it, roll after roll, before you get the real meaning of it from the very depth; and when you have found, as you think, a part of the meaning, you will still need to keep on unwinding, unwinding, and all eternity you will be unwinding the words of this great volume. Yet there is nothing in the Bible but great things. Let me divide, so as to be more brief. First, all things in this Bible are great; but, secondly, some things are the greatest of all.

All things in the Bible are great. Some people think it does not matter what doctrines you believe; that it is immaterial what church you attend; that all denominations are alike. Well, I dislike Mrs. Bigotry above almost all people in the world, and I never give her any compliment or praise; but there is another woman I hate equally as much, and that is Mrs.

Latitudinarianism — a well-known character, who has made the discovery that all of us are alike. Now, I believe that a man may be saved in any church. Some have been saved in the Church of Rome — a few blessed men whose names I could mention here. I know, blessed be God, what multitudes are saved in the Church of England; she has a host of pious, praying men in her midst. I think that all sections of Protestant Christians have a remnant according to the election of grace; and they had need to have, some of them, a little salt, for otherwise they would go to corruption. But when I say that, do you imagine that I think them all on a level? Are they all alike truthful? One sect says infant baptism is right; another says it is wrong; yet you say they are both right. I cannot see that. One teaches we are saved by free grace; another say us that we are not, but are saved by free will; and yet you believe they are both right. I do not understand that. One says that God loves his people, and never leaves off loving them; another says that he did not love his people before they loved him — that he often loves them, and then ceases to love them, and turns them away. They may both be right in the main; but can they both be right when one says “Yes,” and the other says “No?” I must have a pair of spectacles, to enable me to look backwards and forwards at the same time, before I can see that. It cannot be, sirs, that they are both right. But some say they differ upon non-essentials. This text says, “I have written to him the *great* things of my law.” There is nothing in God’s Bible which is not great. Did ever any of you sit down to see which was the purest religion? “Oh,” say you, “we never took the trouble. We went just where our father and mother went.” Ah! that is a profound reason indeed. You went where you father and mother did. I thought you were sensible people; I didn’t think you went where other people pulled you, but went of your own selves. I love my parents above all that breathe, and the very thought that they believe a thing to be true, helps me to think it is correct; but I have not followed them; I belong to a different denomination, and I thank God that I do. I can receive them as Christian brethren and sisters; but I never thought that, because they happened to be one thing, I was to be the same. No such thing. God gave me brains, and I will use them; and if you have any intellect, use it too. Never say it doesn’t matter. Whatever God has put here is of eminent importance; he would not have written a thing that was indifferent. Whatever is here is of some value; therefore, search all questions, try all by the Word of God. I am not afraid to have what I

preach tried by this book. Only give me a fair field and no favor, and this book; if I say anything contrary to it, I will withdraw it the next Sabbath-day. By this I stand, by this I fall. Search and see; but don't say, "it does not matter." If God says a thing, it always must be of importance.

But, while all things in God's word are important, *all are not equally important*. There are certain fundamental and vital truths which must be believed, or otherwise no man would be saved. If you want to know what you must believe, if ye would be saved, you will find the great things of God's law between these two covers; they are all contained here. As a sort of digest or summary of the great things of law, I remember an old friend of mine once saying, "Ah! you preach the three R's, and God will always bless you." I said, "What are the three R's?" and he answered, "Ruin, redemption, and regeneration." They contain the sum and substance of divinity. R for ruin. We were all ruined in the fall; we were lost when Adam sinned, and we were all ruined by our own transgressions; we are all ruined by our own evil hearts, and our own wicked wills; and we all shall be ruined, unless grace saves us. Then there is a second R for redemption. We are ransomed by the blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and without spot; we are rescued by his power; we are ransomed by his merits; we are redeemed by his strength. then there is R for regeneration. If we would be pardoned, we must also be regenerated; for no man can partake of redemption unless he is regenerate. Let him be as good as he pleases; let him serve God, as he imagines, as much as he likes; unless he is regenerate, and has a new heart, a new birth, he will still be in the first R, that is ruin. These things contain an epitome of the gospel. I believe there is a better epitome in the five points of Calvinism; — Election according to the foreknowledge of God; the natural depravity and sinfulness of man; particular redemption by the blood of Christ; effectual calling by the power of the Spirit; and ultimate perseverance by the efforts of God's might. I think all those need to be believed, in order to salvation; but I should not like to write a creed like the Athanasian, beginning with "Whosoever shall be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should hold the Catholic faith, which faith is this," — when I got so far, I should stop, because I should not know what to write. I hold the Catholic faith of the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. It is not for me to draw up creeds; but I ask you to search the Scriptures, for this is the word of life.

God says, "I have written to him the great things of my law." Do you doubt their greatness? Do ye think they are not worth your attention? Reflect a moment, man. Where art thou standing now?

"Lo on a narrow neck of land,
 'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand;
 An inch of time, a moment's space,
 May lodge me in yon heavenly place,
 Or shut me up in hell."

I recollect standing on a seashore once, upon a narrow neck of land, thoughtless that the tide might come up. The tide kept continually washing up on either side, and, wrapped in thoughts, I stood there, until at last there was the greatest difficulty in getting on shore. You and I stand each day on a narrow neck, and there is one wave coming up there; see, how near it is to your foot; and lo! another follows at every tick of the clock; "Our hearts, like muffled drums, are beating funeral marches to the tomb." We are always tending downwards to the grave each moment that we live. *This book* tells me that if I am converted, when I die, there is a heaven of joy and love to receive me; it tells me that angels' pinions shall be stretched, and I, borne by strong cherubic wings, shall out-soar the lightning, and mount beyond the stars, up to the throne of God, to dwell forever.

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
 With God eternally shut in."

Oh! it makes the hot tear start from my eye, it makes my heart too big for this my body, and my brain whirls at the thought of

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
 Name ever dear to me."

Oh! that sweet scene beyond the clouds; sweet fields arrayed in living green, and rivers of delight. Are not these great things? But then, poor unregenerate soul, the Bible says if thou art lost, thou art lost forever; it tells thee that if thou diest without Christ, without God, there is no hope for thee; that there is no place without a gleam of hope, where thou shalt read, in burning letters, "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not;" it tells you, that ye shall be driven from his presence with a "depart, ye cursed."

Are these not great things? Yes, sirs, as heaven is desirable, as hell is terrible, as time is short, as eternity is infinite, as the soul is precious, as pain is to be shunned, as heaven is to be sought, as God is eternal, and as his words are sure, these are great things, things ye ought to listen to.

III. Our last point is: *The treatment which the poor Bible receives in this world*; it is accounted a strange thing. What does that mean — the Bible accounted a strange thing? In the first place, it means that it is very strange to some people, because *they never read it*. I remember reading, on one occasion, the sacred story of David and Goliath, and there was a person present, positively grown up to years of maturity, who said to me, “Dear me! what an interesting story; what book is that in?” And I recollect a person once coming to me in private; I spoke to her about her soul, she told me how deeply she felt, how she had a desire to serve God, but she found another law in her members. I turned to a passage in Romans, and read to her, “The good that I would I do not; and the evil which I would not that I do!” She said, “Is that in the Bible? I did not know it.” I did not blame her, because she had no interest in the Bible till then; but I did not wonder that there could be found persons who knew nothing about such a passage. Ah! you know more about your ledgers than your Bible; you know more about your day-books than what God has written; many of you will read a novel from beginning to end, and what have you got? A mouthful of froth when you have done. But you cannot read the Bible; that solid, lasting, substantial, and satisfying food goes uneaten, locked up in the cupboard of neglect; while anything that man writes, a catch of the day, is greedily devoured. “I have written to him the great things of my law, *but they were counted as a strange thing.*” Ye have never read it. I bring the broad charge against you. Perhaps, ye say, I ought not to charge you with any such thing. I always think it better to have a worse opinion of you than too good an one. I charge you with this: you do not read your Bibles. Some of you have never read it through. I know I speak what your heart must say is honest truth. You are not Bible readers. You say you have the Bible in your houses; do I think you are such heathens as not to have a Bible? But when did you read it last? How do you know that your spectacles, which you have lost, have not been there for the last three years? Many people have not turned over its pages for a long time, and God might say unto them, “I have written unto you the great things of my law, *but they have been accounted unto you a strange thing.*”

Others there be who read the Bible; but when they read it, *they say it is so horribly dry*. That young man over there says it is a “bore;” that is the words he uses. He says, “My mother says to me, when you go up to town, read a chapter every day. Well, I thought I would please her, and I said I would. I am sure I wish I had not. I did not read a chapter yesterday, or the day before. We were so busy, I could not help it.” You do not love the Bible, do you? “No, there is nothing in it which is interesting.” Ah, I thought so. But a little while ago *I* could not see anything in it. Do you know why? Blind men cannot see, can they? But when the Spirit touches the scales of the eyes, they fall off; and when he puts eye-salves on, the Bible becomes precious. I remember a minister who went to see an old lady, and he thought he would give her some precious promises out of the word of God. Turning to one, he saw written in the margin “P.,” and he asked, “What does this mean?” “That means precious, sir.” Further down, he saw “T. and P.,” and he asked what the letters meant. “That,” she said, “means tried and proved, for I have tried and proved it.” If you have tried God’s word and proved it — if it is precious to your soul. then you are Christians; but those persons who despise the Bible, have “neither part nor lot in the matter.” If it is dry to you, you will be dry at last in hell. If you do not esteem it as better than your necessary food, there is no hope for you; for you lack the greatest evidence of your Christianity.

Alas! alas! the worst case is to come. *There are some people who hate the Bible*, as well as despise it. Is there such an one stepped in here? Some of you said, “Let us go and hear what the young preacher has to say to us.” This is what he has to say to you: “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish.” This is what he hath to say to you: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all that forget God.” And this, again he has to say to you: “Behold, there shall come in the last days, mockers, like yourselves, walking after your own lusts.” But more: he tells you to-night that if you are saved, you must find salvation here. Therefore, despise not the Bible; but search it, read it, and come unto it. Rest thee will assured, O scorner, that thy laughs cannot alter truth, thy jests cannot avert thine inevitable doom. Though in thy hardihood thou shouldst make a league with death, and sign a covenant with hell — yet swift justice shall o’ertake thee, and strong vengeance strike the low. In vain dost thou jeer and mock, for eternal verities are mightier than thy sophistries, nor can thy smart sayings alter the divine truth of a single word of this volume of Revelation. Oh!

why dost thou quarrel with thy best friend, and ill-treat thy only refuge? There yet remains hope, even for the scorner. Hope in a Saviour's veins. Hope in the Father's mercy. Hope in the Holy Spirit's omnipotent agency.

I have done when I have said one word. My friend, the philosopher, says it may be very well for me to urge people to read the Bible; but he thinks there are a great many sciences far more interesting and useful than theology. *Extremely obliged to you for your opinion, sir.* What science do you mean? The science of dissecting beetles and arranging butterflies? "No," you say, "certainly not." The science, then, of arranging stones, and telling us of the strata of the earth? "No, not exactly that." Which science, then? "Oh, all sciences," say you, "are better than the science of the Bible." Ah! sir, that is your opinion; and it is because you are far from God, that you say so. But the science of Jesus Christ is the most excellent of sciences. Let no one turn away from the Bible because it is not a book of learning and wisdom. It is. Would ye know astronomy? It is here: it tells you of the Sun of Righteousness and the Star of Bethlehem. Would you know of botany? It is here: it tells you of the plant of renown — the Lily of the Valley, and the rose of Sharon. Would you know geology and mineralogy? You shall learn it here: for you may read of the Rock of Ages, and the White Stone with the name engraven thereon, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. Would ye study history? Here is the most ancient of all the records of the history of the human race. Whate'er your science is, come and bend o'er this book; your science is here. Come and drink out of this fair fount of knowledge and wisdom, and ye shall find yourselves made wise unto salvation. Wise and foolish, babes and men, gray-headed sires, youths and maidens — I speak to you, I plead with you, I beg of you respect your Bibles, and search them out, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Christ.

I have done. Let us go home and practice what we have heard. I have heard of a woman, who, when she was asked what she remembered of the minister's sermon, said, "I don't recollect anything of it. It was about short weights and bad measures, and I didn't recollect anything but to go home and burn the bushel." So, if you will remember to go home and burn the bushel, if you will recollect to go home and read your Bibles, I shall have said enough. And may God, in his infinite mercy, when you read

your Bibles, pour into your souls the illuminating rays of the Sun of Righteousness, by the agency of the ever-adorable Spirit; then you will read to your profit and to your soul's salvation.

We may say of THE BIBLE:

“God’s cabinet of revealed counsel ‘t is!
Where weal and woe, are ordered so
That every man may know which shall be his;
Unless his own mistake, false application make.

“It is the index to eternity.
He cannot miss of endless bliss.
That takes this chart to steer by,
Nor can he be mistook that speaketh by this book.

“It is the book of God. What if I should
Say, God of books, let him that looks
Angry at that expression, as too bold,
His thoughts in silence smother, till he find such another.”

THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT

LAW AND GRACE

A Sermon

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 26, 1855, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

— Romans 5:20

There is no point upon which men make greater mistakes than upon the relation which exists between the law and the gospel. Some men put the law instead of the gospel: others put the gospel instead of the law; some modify the law and the gospel, and preach neither law nor gospel: and others entirely abrogate the law, by bringing in the gospel. Many there are who think that the law is the gospel, and who teach that men by good works of benevolence, honesty, righteousness, and sobriety, may be saved. Such men do err. On the other hand, many teach that the gospel is a law; that it has certain commands in it, by obedience to which, men are meritoriously saved; such men err from the truth, and understand it not. A certain class maintain that the law and the gospel are mixed, and that partly by observance of the law, and partly by God’s grace, men are saved. These men understand not the truth, and are false teachers. This morning I shall attempt — God helping me to show you what is the design of the law, and then what is the end of the gospel. The coming of the law is explained in regard to its objects: “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.” Then comes the mission of the gospel: “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

I shall consider this text in two senses this morning. First, *as it respects the world at large and the entrance of the law into it*; and then afterwards, *as respecting the heart of the convinced sinner, and the entrance of the law into the conscience.*

I. First, we shall speak of the text as CONCERNING THE WORLD.

The object of God in sending the law into the world was “that the offence might abound.” But then comes the gospel, for “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” First, then, in reference to the entire world, *God sent the law into the world “that the offence might abound.”* There was sin in the world long before God sent the law. God gave his law that the offence might seem to be an offence; ay, and that the offence might abound exceedingly more than it could have done without its coming. There was sin long before Sinai smoked; long ere the mountain trembled beneath the weight of Deity, and the dread trumpet sounded exceeding loud and long, there had been transgression. And where that law has never been heard, in heathen countries where that word has never gone forth, yet there is sin, — because, though men cannot sin against the law which they have never seen, yet they can all rebel against the light of nature, against the dictates of conscience, and against that traditional remembrance of right and wrong, which has followed mankind from the place where God created them. All men, in every land, have consciences, and therefore all men can sin. The ignorant Hottentot, who has never heard anything of a God, has just so much of the light of nature, that in the things that are outwardly good or bad he will discern the difference; and though he foolishly bows down to stocks and stones, he has a judgment which, if he used it, would teach him better. If he chose to use his talents, he might know there is a God; for the Apostle, when speaking of men who have only the light of nature, plainly declares that “the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” Romans 1:20. Without a divine revelation men can sin, and sin exceedingly — conscience, nature, tradition, and reason, being each of them, sufficient to condemn them for their violated commandments. The law makes no one a sinner; all men are such in Adam, and were so practically before its introduction. It entered that “the offence might *abound.*” Now this seems a very terrible thought at first sight, and many ministers would have shirked

this text altogether. But when I find a verse I do not understand, I usually think it is a text I *should* study; and I try to seek it out before my heavenly Father, and then when he has opened it to my soul, I reckon it my duty to communicate it to you, with the holy aid of the Spirit. “The law entered that the offence might abound.” I will attempt to show you how the law makes offenses “abound.”

1. First of all, the law tells us that *many things are sins which we should never have thought to be so if it had not been for the additional light*. Even with the light of nature, and the light of conscience, and the light of tradition, there are some things we should never have believed to be sins had we not been taught so by the law. Now, what man by light of conscience, would keep holy the Sabbath-day — suppose he never read the Bible, and never heard of it? If he lived in a South Sea island he might know there was a God, but not by any possibility could he find out that the seventh part of his time should be set apart to that God. We find that there are certain festivals and feasts among heathens, and that they set apart days in honour of their fancied gods; but I should like to know where they could discover that there was a certain *seventh* day to be set apart to God, to spend the time in his house of prayer. How could they, unless indeed, tradition may have handed down the fact of the original consecration of that day by the creating Jehovah. I cannot conceive it possible that either conscience or reason could have taught them such a command as this: Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. Moreover, if in the term “law” we comprehend the ceremonial ritual, we can plainly see that many things, in appearance quite indifferent, were by it constituted sins. The eating of animals that do not chew the cud and divide the hoof, the wearing of linsey-woolsey, the sitting on a bed polluted by a leper — with a thousand other things, all seem to have no sin in them, but the law made them into sins, and so made the offence to abound.

2. It is a fact which you can verify by looking at the working of your own mind, *that law has a tendency to make men rebel*. Human nature rises against restraint. I had not known lust except the law had said, “Thou shalt

not covet.” The depravity of man is excited to rebellion by the promulgation of laws. So evil are we, that we conceive at once the desire to commit an act, simply because it is forbidden. Children, we all know, as a rule, will always desire what they may not have, and if forbidden to touch anything, will either do so when an opportunity serves, or will long to be able to do so. The same tendency any student of human nature can discern in man-kind at large. Is then the law chargeable with my sin? God forbid. “But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me.” Romans 7:7,8,11. The law is holy, and just, and good, *it* is not faulty, but *sin* uses it as an occasion of offence, and rebels when it ought to obey. Augustine placed the truth in a clear light when he wrote — “The law is not in fault, but our evil and wicked nature; even as a heap of lime is still and quiet until water be poured thereon, but then it begins to smoke and burn, not from the fault of the water, but from the nature and kind of the lime which will not endure it.” Thus, you see, this is a second sense in which the entrance of the law causes the offence to abound.

3. Yet again, the law *increases the sinfulness of sin, by removing all excuse of ignorance*. Until men know the law, their crimes have at least a palliation of partial ignorance, but when the code of rules is spread before them, their offenses become greater, since they are committed against light and knowledge. He who sins against conscience shall be condemned; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who despises the voice of Jehovah, defies his sacred sovereignty, and willfully tramples on his commands. The more light the greater guilt — the law affords that light, and so causes us to become double offenders. Oh, ye nations of the earth who have heard the law of Jehovah, your sin is increased, and your offence abounds.

Methinks I hear some say, “How unwise it must have been that a law should come to make these things abound!” Does it not, at first sight, seem very harsh that the great author of the world should give us a law which will not justify, but indirectly cause our condemnation to be greater? Does it not seem to be a thing which a gracious God would not reveal, but would have withheld? But, know ye, “that the foolishness of God is wiser than men;” and understand ye that there is a gracious purpose even here.

Natural men dream that by a strict performance of duty they shall obtain favor, but God saith thus: "I will show them their folly by proclaiming a law so high that they will despair of attaining unto it. They think that works will be sufficient to save them. They think falsely, and they will be ruined by their mistake. I will send them a law so terrible in its censures, so unflinching in its demands, that they cannot possibly obey it, and they will be driven even to desperation, and come and accept my mercy through Jesus Christ. They cannot be saved by the law — not by the law of nature. As it is, they have sinned against it. But yet, I know, they have foolishly hoped to keep my law, and think by works of the law they may be justified; whereas I have said, 'By the works of the law no flesh living can be justified;' therefore I will write a law — it shall be a black and heavy one — a burden which they cannot carry; and then they will turn away and say, 'I will not attempt to perform it; I will ask my Saviour to bear it for me.'" Imagine a case — Some young men are about to go to sea, where I foresee they will meet with a storm. Suppose you put me in a position where I may cause a tempest before the other shall arise. Well, by the time the natural storm comes on, those young men will be a long way out at sea, and they will be wrecked and ruined before they can put back and be safe. But what do I? Why, when they are just at the mouth of the river, I send a storm, putting them in the greatest danger, and precipitating them ashore, so that they are saved. Thus did God. He sends a law which shows them the roughness of the journey. The tempest of law compels them to put back to the harbour of free grace, and saves them from a most terrible destruction, which would otherwise overwhelm them. The law never came to save men. It never was its intention at all. It came on purpose to make the evidence complete that salvation by works is impossible, and thus to drive the elect of God to rely wholly on the finished salvation of the gospel. Now, just to illustrate my meaning, let me describe it by one more figure. You all remember those high mountains called the Alps. Well, it would be a great mercy if those Alps were a little higher. It would have been, at all events, for Napoleon's soldiers when he led his large army over, and caused thousands to perish in crossing. Now, if it could have been possible to pile another Alps on their summit, and make them higher than the Himalaya, would not the increased difficulty have deterred him from his enterprise, and so have averted the destruction of thousands? Napoleon demanded, "Is it possible?" "Barely possible,"

was the reply. “*Avancez*,” cried Buonaparte; and the host were soon toiling up the mountain side. Now, by the light of nature, *it does seem possible* for us to go over this mountain of works, but all men would have perished in the attempt, the path even of this lower hill being too narrow for mortal footsteps. God, therefore, puts another law, like a mountain, on the top; and now the sinner says, “I cannot climb over that. It is a task beyond Herculean might. I see before me a narrow pass, called the pass of Jesus Christ’s mercy — the pass of the cross — methinks I will wend my way thither.” But if it had not been that the mountain was too high for him, he would have gone climbing up, and climbing up, until he sank into some chasm, or was lost under some mighty avalanche, or in some other way perished eternally. But the law comes that the whole world might see the impossibility of being saved by works.

Let us turn to the more pleasing part of the subject — the *superabundance of grace*. Having bewailed the devastations and injurious deeds of sin, it delights our hearts to be assured that “grace did much more abound.”

1. *Grace excels sin in the numbers it brings beneath its sway.* It is my firm belief that the number of the saved will be far greater than the damned. It is written that in all things Jesus shall have pre-eminence; and why is this to be left out? Can we think that Satan will have more followers than Jesus? Oh, no; for while *it is* written that the redeemed are a number that no man can number; it is *not* recorded that the lost are beyond numeration. True, we know that the visible elect are ever a *remnant* but then there are others to be added. Think for a moment of the army of infant souls who are now in heaven. These all fell in Adam, but being all elect, were all redeemed and regenerated, and were privileged to fly from the mother’s breasts to glory. Happy lot, which we who are spared might well envy. Nor let it be forgotten that the multitudes of converts in the millennial age will very much turn the scale. For then the world will be exceedingly populous, and a thousand years of a reign of grace might easily suffice to overcome the majority accumulated by sin during six thousand years of its tyranny. In that peaceful period, when all shall know him, from the least even unto the greatest, the sons of God shall fly as doves to their windows, and the Redeemer’s family shall be exceedingly multiplied.

What though those who have been deluded by superstition, and destroyed by lust, must be counted by thousands — grace has still the pre-eminence.

Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten-thousands. We admit that the number of the damned will be immense, but we do think that the two states of infancy and millennial glory will furnish so great a reserve of saints that Christ shall win the day. The procession of the lost may be long; there must be thousands, and thousands, and thousands, of those who have perished, but the greater procession of the King of kings shall be composed of larger hosts than even these. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more *abound*.” The trophies of free grace will be far more than the trophies of sin.

Yet again. Grace doth “*much* more abound,” — because a time shall come when the world shall be all full of grace; whereas there has never been a period in this world’s history when it was wholly given to sin. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, there was still a display of grace in the world; for in the garden at the close of the day, God said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shalt bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;” and since that first transgression, there has never been a moment when grace has entirely lost its footing in the earth. God has always had his servants on earth; at times they have been hidden by fifties in the caves, but they have never been utterly cut off. Grace might be low; the stream might be very shallow, but it has never been wholly dry. There has always been a salt of grace in the world to counteract the power of sin. The clouds have never been so universal as to hide the day. But the time is fast approaching when grace shall extend all over our poor world and be universal. According to the Bible testimony, we look for the great day when the dark cloud which has swathed this world in darkness shall be removed, and it shall shine once more like all its sister planets. It hath been for many a long year clouded and veiled by sin and corruption; but the last fire shall consume its rags and sackcloth. After that fire, the world in righteousness shall shine. The huge molten mass now slumbering in the bowels of our common mother shall furnish the means of purity. Palaces, and crowns, and peoples, and empires, are all to be melted down; and after like a plague-house, the present creation has been burned up entirely, God will breathe upon the heated mass, and it will cool down again. He will smile on it as he did when he first created it, and the rivers will run down the new-made hills, the oceans will float in new-made channels; and the world will be again the abode of the righteous for ever and for ever. This fallen world will be

restored to its orbit; that gem which was lost from the sceptre of God shall be set again, yea, he shall wear it as a signet about his arm. Christ died for the world; and what he died for, he will have. He died for the whole world, and the whole world he will have, when he has purified it and cleansed it and fitted it for himself. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;” for grace shall be universal, whereas sin never was.

One thought more. Hath the world lost its possessions by sin? It has gained far more by grace. True, we have been expelled a garden of delights, where peace, love, and happiness found a glorious habitation. True, Eden is not ours, with its luscious fruits, its blissful bowers, and its rivers flowing o’er sands of gold, but we have through Jesus a fairer habitation. He hath made us sit together in heavenly places — the plains of heaven exceed the fields of paradise in the ever-new delights which they afford, while the tree of life, and the river from the throne render the inhabitants of the celestial regions more than emparadised. Did we lose natural life and subject ourselves to painful death by sin? Has not grace revealed an immortality for the sake of which we are too glad to die? Life lost in Adam is more restored in Christ. We admit that our original robes were rent in sunder by Adam, but Jesus has clothed us with a divine righteousness, far exceeding in value even the spotless robes of created innocence. We mourn our low and miserable condition, through sin, but we will rejoice at the thought, that we are now more secure than before we fell, and are brought into closer alliance with Jesus than our standing could have procured us. O Jesus! thou hast won us an inheritance more wide than our sin has ever lavished. Thy grace has overtopped our sins. “Grace doth much more abound.”

II. Now we come to the second part of the subject, and that is THE ENTRANCE OF THE LAW INTO THE HEART.

We have to deal carefully when we come to deal with internal things; it is not easy to talk about this little thing, the heart. When we begin to meddle with the law of their soul, many become indignant, but we do not fear their wrath. We are going to attack the hidden man this morning. The law entered their hearts that sin might abound, “but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

1. The law causes the offence to abound by *discovering sin to the soul*. When once God the Holy Ghost applies the law to the conscience, secret sins are dragged to light, little sins are magnified to their true size, and things apparently harmless become exceedingly sinful. Before that dread searcher of the hearts and trier of the reins makes his entrance into the soul, it appears righteous, just, lovely, and holy; but when he reveals the hidden evils, the scene is changed. Offenses which were once styled peccadilloes, trifles, freaks of youth, follies, indulgences, little slip, etc., then appear in their true colour, as breaches of the law of God, deserving condign punishment.

John Bunyan shall explain my meaning by an extract from his famous allegory: “Then the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him into a very large parlour that was full of dust, because never swept; in which after he had reviewed it a little while, the Interpreter called for a man to sweep. Now, when he began to sweep, the dust became so abundantly to fly about, that Christian had almost therewith been choked. Then said Interpreter to a damsel that stood by, ‘Bring hither water, and sprinkle the room’; the which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure. Then said Christian, ‘What means this?’ The Interpreter answered, ‘This parlour is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the gospel. The dust is his original sin and inward corruptions that have defiled the whole man. He that began to sweep, at first, is the law; but she that brought the water and did sprinkle it, is the gospel. Now, whereas thou sawest that as soon as the first began to sweep, the dust did so fly about, that the room could not by him be cleansed, but that thou wast almost choked therewith; this is to show thee, that the law, instead of cleansing the heart (by its working) from sin, doth revive, Romans 7:9, put strength into, 1 Corinthians 15:56, and increase it in the soul, Romans 5:20, even as it doth discover and forbid it, for that doth not give power to subdue. Again, as thou sawest the damsel sprinkle the room with water, upon which it was cleansed with pleasure; this is to show thee, that when the gospel comes in the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart, then, I say, even as thou sawest the damsel lay the dust by sprinkling the floor with water, so is sin vanquished and subdued, and the soul made clean, through the faith of it, and consequently fit for the King of glory to inhabit.’”

The heart is like a dark cellar, full of lizards, cockroaches, beetles, and all kinds of reptiles and insects, which in the dark we see not, but the law takes down the shutters and lets in the light, and so we see the evil. Thus sin becoming apparent by the law, it is written the law makes the offence to abound.

2. Once again. *The law, when it comes into the heart, shows us how very black we are.* Some of us know that we are sinners. It is very easy to say it. The word “sinner” hath only two syllables in it, and many there be who frequently have it on their lips, but who do not understand it. They see their sin, but it does not appear exceedingly sinful till the law comes. We think there is something sinful in it; but when the law comes, we detect its abomination. Has God’s holy light ever shone into your souls? Have you had the fountains of your great depravity and evil broken up, and been wakened up sufficiently to say, “O God! I have sinned?” Now, if you have your hearts broken up by the law, you will find the heart is more deceitful than the devil. I can say this of myself, I am very much afraid of mine, it is so bad. The Bible says, “The heart is deceitful above all things.” The devil is one of the things; therefore, it is worse than the devil — “and desperately wicked.” How many do we find who are saying, “Well, I trust I have a very good heart at the bottom. There may be a little amiss at the top, but I am very good-hearted at bottom.” If you saw some fruit on the top of a basket that was not quite good, would you buy the basket because they told you, “Ay, but they are good at the bottom?” “No, no,” you would say, “they are sure to be best at the top, and if they are bad there, they are sure to be rotten below.” There are many people who live queer lives, and some friends say, “He is good-hearted at bottom; he would get drunk sometimes, but he is very good-hearted at the bottom.” Ah! never believe it. Men are seldom estimated better than they seem to be. If the outside of the cup or platter is clean, the inside may be dirty, but if the outside is impure, you may always be sure the inside is no better. Most of us put our goods in the window — keep all our good things in the front, and bad things behind. Let you and I, instead of making excuses about ourselves, about the badness of our hearts, if the law has entered into your soul, bow down and say, “O the sin — O the uncleanness — the blackness — the awful nature of our crimes!” “The law entered that the offence may abound.”

3. The law reveals the exceeding abundance of sin, *by discovering to us the depravity of our nature*. We are all prepared to charge the serpent with our guilt, or to insinuate that we go astray, from the force of ill example — but the Holy Spirit dissipates these dreams by bringing the law into the heart. Then the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the chambers of the imagery are opened, the innate evil of the very essence of fallen man is discovered.

The law cuts into the core of the evil, it reveals the seat of the malady, and informs us that the leprosy lies deep within. Oh! how the man abhors himself when he sees all his rivers of water turned into blood, and loathsomeness creeping over all his being. He learns that sin is no flesh wound, but a stab in the heart; he discovers that the poison has impregnated his veins, lies in his very marrow, and hath its fountain in his inmost heart. Now he loathes himself, and would fain be healed. Actual sin seems not half so terrible as in-bred sin, and at the thought of what he is, he turns pale, and gives up salvation by works as an impossibility.

4. Having thus removed the mask and shown the desperate case of the sinner, the relentless law causes the offence to abound yet more by *bringing home the sentence of condemnation*. It mounts the judgment seat, puts on the black cap, and pronounces the sentence of death. With a harsh un pitying voice it solemnly thunders forth the words, “Condemned already.” It bids the soul prepare its defence, knowing well that all apology has been taken away by its former work of conviction. The sinner is therefore speechless, and the law, with frowning looks, lifts up the veil of hell, and gives the man a glimpse of torment. The soul feels that the sentence is just, that the punishment is not too severe, and that mercy it has no right to expect; it stands quivering, trembling, fainting, and intoxicated with dismay, until it falls prostrate in utter despair. The sinner puts the rope around his own neck, arrays himself in the attire of the condemned, and throws himself at the foot of the King’s throne, with but one thought, “I am vile”; and with one prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

5. Nor does the law cease its operations even here, for it renders the offence yet more apparent *by discovering the powerlessness occasioned by sin*. It not only condemns but it actually kills. He who once thought that

he could repent and believe at pleasure, finds in himself no power to do either the one or the other.

When Moses smites the sinner he bruises and mangles him with the first blow, but at a second or a third, he falls down as one dead. I myself have been in such a condition that if heaven could have been purchased by a single prayer I should have been damned, for I could no more pray than I could fly. Moreover, when we are in the grave which the law has dugged for us, we feel as if we did not feel, and we grieve because we cannot grieve. The dread mountain lies upon us which renders it impossible to stir hand or foot, and when we would cry for help our voice refuses to obey us. In vain the minister cries, "Repent," Our hard heart will not melt; in vain he exhorts us to believe; that faith of which he speaks seems to be as much beyond our capacity as the creation of the universe. Ruin is now become ruin indeed. The thundering sentence is in our ears, "CONDEMNED ALREADY," another cry follows it, "DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS," and a third, more awful and terrible, mingles its horrible warning, "*The wrath to come — the wrath to come.*" In the opinion of the sinner he is now cast out as a corrupt carcass, he expects each moment to be tormented by the worm that never dies and to lift up his eyes in hell. Now is mercy's moment, and we turn the subject from condemning law to abounding grace.

Listen, O heavy laden, condemned sinner, while in my Master's name, I publish superabounding grace. *Grace excels sin in its measure and efficacy.* Though your sins are many, mercy hath many pardons. Though they excel the stars, the sands, the drops of dew in their number, one act of remission can cancel all. Your iniquity, though a mountain, shall be cast into the midst of the sea. Your blackness shall be washed out by the cleansing flood of your Redeemer's gore. Mark! I said YOUR sins, and I meant to say so, for if you are now a law-condemned sinner, I know you to be a vessel of mercy by that very sign. Oh, hellish sinners, abandoned profligates, off-casts of society, outcasts from the company of sinners themselves, if ye acknowledge your iniquity, here is mercy, broad, ample, free, immense, INFINITE. Remember this O sinner, —

“If all the sins that men have done,
 In will, in word, in thoughts, in deed,
 Since words were made, or time began,
 Were laid on one poor sinner’s head.
 The stream of Jesus’ precious blood
 Applied, removes the dreadful load.”

Yet again, grace excelleth sin in another thing. *Sin shows us its parent, and tells us our heart is the father of it, but grace surpasseth sin there, and shows the Author of grace — the King of kings.* The law traces sin up to our heart; grace traces its own origin to God, and

“In his sacred breast I see
 Eternal thoughts of love to me.”

O Christian, what a blessed thing grace is, for its source is in the everlasting mountains. Sinner, if you are the vilest in the world, if God forgives you this morning, you will be able to trace your pedigree to him, for you will become one of the sons of God, and have him always for your Father. Methinks I see you a wretched criminal at the bar, and I hear mercy cry, “Discharge him!” He is pallid, halt, sick, maimed — heal him. He is of a vile race — lo, I will adopt him into my family. Sinner! God taketh thee for his son. What, though thou art poor, God says, “I will take thee to be mine for ever. Thou shalt be my heir. There is thy fair brother. In ties of blood he is one with thee — Jesus is thy actual brother!” Yet how came this change? Oh! is not that an act of mercy? “Grace did much more abound.”

“Grace hath put me in the number
 Of the Saviour’s family.”

Grace outdoes sin, for it lifts us higher than the place from which we fell.

And again, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”; *because the sentence of the law may be reversed, but that of grace never can.* I stand here and feel condemned, yet, perhaps, I have a hope that I may be acquitted. There is a dying hope of acquittal still left. But when we are justified, there is no fear of condemnation. I cannot be condemned if I am once justified; *fully* absolved I am by grace. I defy Satan to lay hands on me, if I am a justified man. The state of justification is an unvariable one,

and is indissolubly united to glory. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Oh! poor condemned sinner, doth not this charm thee, and make thee in love with free grace? And all this is **YOURS**. Your crimes, if once blotted out, shall never be laid to your charge again. The justification of the gospel is no Arminian sham, which may be reversed if you should in future turn aside. No; the debt once paid, cannot be demanded twice — the punishment, once endured, cannot again be inflicted. Saved, saved, saved, entirely saved by divine grace, you may walk without fear the wide world over.

And yet, once more. Just as sin makes us sick, and grievous, and sad, so does grace make us *far more joyful and free*. Sin causeth one to go about with an aching heart, till he seems as if the world would swallow him, and mountains hang above ready to drop upon him. This is the effect of the law. The law makes us sad; the law makes us miserable. But, poor sinner, grace removeth the evil effects of sin upon your spirit, if thou dost believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt go out of this place with a sparkling eye and a light heart. Ah! well do I remember the morning when I stepped into a little place of worship, as miserable almost as hell could make me — being ruined and lost. I had often been at chapels where they spoke of the law, but I heard not the gospel. I sat down the pew a chained and imprisoned sinner; the Word of God came, and I went out free. Though I went in miserable as hell, I went out elated and joyful. I sat there black; I went away whiter than driven snow. God had said, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow.” Why not this be thy lot, my brother, if thou feelest thyself a sinner now? It is all he asks of thee, to feel thy need of him, this thou hast, and now the blood of Jesus lies before thee. “The law has entered that sin might abound.” Thou are forgiven, only believe it; elect, only believe it; ‘tis the truth that thou are saved.

And now, lastly, poor sinner, has sin made thee unfit for heaven? Grace shall render thee a fit companion for seraphs and the just made perfect. Thou who art to-day lost and destroyed by sin, shalt one day find thyself with a crown upon thy head, and a golden harp in thine hand, exalted to the throne of the Most High. Think, O drunkard, if thou repentest, there is a crown laid up for thee in heaven. Ye guiltiest, most lost and depraved, are ye condemned in your conscience by the law? Then I invite you, in my Master's name, to accept pardon through his blood. He suffered in your stead, he has atoned for your guilt and you are acquitted. Thou art an object of his eternal affection, the law is but a schoolmaster, to bring thee to Christ. Cast thyself on him. Fall into the arms of saving grace. No works are required, no fitness, no righteousness, no doings. Ye are complete in him who said, "It is finished."

"Ye debtors whom he gives to know
That you ten thousand talents owe,
When humble at his feet you fall,
Your gracious God forgives them all.

"Slaves, that have borne the heavy chain
Of sin, and hell's tyrannic reign,
To liberty assert your claim,
And urge the great Redeemer's name.

"The rich inheritance of heaven,
Your joy, your boast, is freely giv'n;
Fair Salem your arrival waits,
With golden streets, and pearly gates.

"Her blest inhabitants no more
Bondage and poverty implore!
No debt, but love immensely great;
Their joy still rises with the debt."

THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT

SOVEREIGNTY AND SALVATION

A Sermon

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 6, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

— Isaiah 45:22

Six years ago to-day, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,” but had yet, by divine grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage, and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery. Seeking rest, and finding none, I stepped within the house of God, and sat there, afraid to look upward, lest I should be utterly cut off, and lest his fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in his pulpit, and, as I have done this morning, read this text, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” I looked that moment; the grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the self-same instant; and now I think I can say with truth,

“Ere since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

I shall never forget that day, while memory holds its place; nor can I help repeating this text whenever I remember that hour when first I knew the

Lord. How strangely gracious! How wonderfully and marvelously kind, that he who heard these words so little time ago for his own soul's profit, should now address you this morning as his hearers from the same text, in the full and confident hope that some poor sinner within these walls may hear the glad tidings of salvation for himself also, and may to-day, on this 6th of January, be "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!"

If it were within the range of human capacity to conceive a time when God dwelt alone, without his creatures, we should then have one of the grandest and most stupendous ideas of God. There was a season when as yet the sun had never run his race, nor commenced flinging his golden rays across space, to gladden the earth. There was an era when no stars sparkled in the firmament. for there was no sea of azure in which they might float. There was a time when all that we now behold of God's great universe was yet unborn, slumbering within the mind of God, as yet uncreate and no-existent; yet there was God, and he was "over all blessed for ever;" though no seraphs hymned his praises, though no strong-winged cherubs flashed like lightning to do his high behests, though he was without a retinue, yet he sat as a king on his throne, the mighty God, for ever to be worshipped — the Dread Supreme, in solemn silence dwelling by himself in vast immensity, making the placid clouds his canopy, and the light from his own countenance forming the brightness of his glory. God was, and God is. From the beginning God was God; ere worlds had beginning, he was "from everlasting to everlasting." Now, when it pleased him to create his creatures, does it not strike you how infinitely those creatures must have been below himself? If you are potters, and you fashion upon the wheel a vessel, shall that piece of clay arrogate to itself equality with you? Nay, at what a distance will it be from you, because you have been in part its creator. So where the Almighty formed his creatures, was it not consummate impudence, that they should venture for a moment to compare themselves with him? Yet that arch traitor, that leader of rebels, Satan, sought to climb to the high throne of God, soon to find his aim too high, and hell itself not low enough wherein to escape divine vengeance. He knows that God is "God alone." Since the world was created, man has imitated Satan; the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, has sought to match itself with the Eternal. Hence it has even been one of the objects of the great Jehovah, to teach mankind that he is God, and beside him there

is none else. This is the lesson he has been teaching the world since it went astray from him. He has been busying himself in breaking down the high places, in exalting the valleys, in casting down imaginations and lofty looks, that all the world might

“Know that he Lord is God alone,
He can create, and he destroy.”

This morning we shall attempt to show you, in the first place, *how God has been teaching this great lesson to the world* — that he is God, and beside him there is none else; and then, secondly, *the special way in which he designs to teach it in the matter of salvation* — “Look unto me, and be ye saved: for I am God, and there is none else.”

I. First, then, HOW HAS GOD BEEN TEACHING THIS LESSON TO MANKIND?

We reply, he has taught it, first of all, to *false gods, and to the idolaters who have bowed before them*. Man, in his wickedness and sin, has set up a block of wood and stone to be his maker, and has bowed before it. He hath fashioned for himself out of a goodly tree an image made unto the likeness of mortal man, or of the fishes of the sea, or of creeping things of the earth, and he has prostrated his body, and his soul too, before that creature of his own hands, calling it a God, while it had neither eyes to see, nor hands to handle, nor ears to hear. But how hath God poured contempt on the ancient gods of the heathen? Where are they now? Are they so much as known? Where are those false deities before whom the multitudes of Ninevah prostrated themselves? Ask the moles and the bats, whose companions they are; or ask the mounds beneath which they are buried; or go where the idle gazer walketh through the museum — see them there as curiosities, and smile to think that men should ever bow before such gods as these. and where are the gods of Persia? Where are they? The fires are quenched, and the fire-worshipper hath almost ceased out of the earth. Where are the gods of Greece — those gods adorned with poetry, and hymned in the most sublime odes? Where are they? They are gone. Who talks of them now, but as things that were of yore? Jupiter — doth any one bow before him? And who is he that adores Saturn? They are passed away, and they are forgotten. And where are the gods of Rome? Doth Janus now command the temple? or do the vestal virgins now feed their

perpetual fires? Are there any now that bow before these gods? No, they have lost their thrones. And where are the gods of the South Sea Islands — those bloody demons before whom wretched creatures prostrated their bodies? They have well-nigh become extinct. Ask the inhabitants of China and Polynesia where are the gods before which they bowed? Ask, and echo says ask, and ask again. They are cast down from their thrones; they are hurled from their pedestals; their chariots are broken, their sceptres are burnt in the fire, their glories are departed; God hath gotten unto himself the victory over false gods, and taught their worshippers that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. Are their gods still worshipped, or idols before which the nations bow themselves? Wait but a little while, and ye shall see them fall. Cruel Juggernaut, whose car still crushes in its motion the foolish ones who throw themselves before it shall yet be the object of derision; and the most noted idols, such as Buddha, and Brahma, and Vishnu, shall yet stoop themselves to the earth, and men shall tread them down as mire in the streets; for God will teach all men that he is God, and that there is none else.

Mark ye, yet again, how God has taught this truth *to empires*. Empires have risen up, and have been gods of the era; their kings and princes have taken to themselves high titles, and have been worshipped by the multitude. But ask the empires whether there is any beside God? Do you not think you hear the boasting soliloquy of Babylon — “I sit as a queen, and am no widow; I shall see no sorrow; I am God, and there is none beside me?” And think ye not now, if ye walk over ruined Babylon, that ye will meet aught save the solemn spirit of the Bible, standing like a prophet gray with age, and telling you that there is one God, and that beside him there is none else? Go ye to Babylon, covered with its sand, the sand of its own ruins; stand ye on the mounds of Nineveh, and let the voice come up — “There is one God, and empires sink before him; there is only one Potentate, and the princes and kings of the earth, with their dynasties and thrones, are shaken by the trampling of his foot.” Go, seat yourselves in the temples of Greece; mark ye there what proud words Alexander once did speak; but now, where is he, and where his empire too? Sit on the ruined arches of the bridge of Carthage, or walk ye through the desolated theatres of Rome, and ye will hear a voice in the wild wind amid those ruins — “I am God, and there is none else.” “O city, though didst call thyself eternal; I have made thee melt away like dew. Though saidst ‘I

sit on seven hills, and I shall last forever; ‘ I have made thee crumble, and thou art now a miserable and contemptible place, compared with what thou wast. Thou wast once stone, thou madest thyself; I have made thee stone again, and brought thee low.’ O! how has God taught monarchies and empires that have set themselves up like new kingdoms of heaven. that he is God, and that there is none else!

Again: how has he taught his great truth *to monarchs!* There are some who have been most proud that have had to learn it in a way more hard than others. Take, for instance, Nebuchadnezzar. His crown is on his head, his purple robe is over his shoulders; he walks through proud Babylon, and says, “Is not this great Babylon which I have builded?” Do you see that creature in the field there? It is a man. “A man?” say you; its hair has grown like eagles’ feathers, and its nails like birds’ claws; it walketh on all-fours, and eateth grass, like an ox; it is driven out from men. That is the monarch who said — “Is not this great Babylon that I have builded?” And he is now restored to Babylon’s palace, that he may “bless the Most High who is able to abase those that walk in pride.” Remember another monarch. Look at Herod. He sits in the midst of his people, and he speaks. Hear ye the impious shout? “It is the voice of God,” they cry, “and not the voice of man.” The proud monarch gives not God the glory; he affects the God, and seems to shake the spheres, imagining himself divine. There is a worm that creepeth into his body, and yet another, and another; and ere that sun has set, he is eaten up of worms. Ah! monarch! though thoughtest of being a God, and worms have eaten thee! thou hast thought of being more than man; and what art thou? Less than man, for worms consume thee, and thou art the prey of corruption. Thus God humbleth the proud; thus he abaseth the mighty. We might give you instances from modern history; but the death of a king is all-sufficient to teach this one lesson, if men would but learn it. When kings die, and in funeral pomp are carried to the grave, we are taught the lesson — “I am God, and beside me there is none else.” When we hear of revolutions, and the shaking of empires — when we see old dynasties tremble, and gray-haired monarchs driven from their thrones, then it is that Jehovah seems to put his foot upon land and sea, and with his hand uplifted cries — “Hear! ye inhabitants of the earth! Ye are but as grasshoppers; ‘I am God, and beside me there is none else.’”

Again: our God has had much to do to teach this lesson *to the wise men of this world*; for as rank, pomp, and power, have set themselves up in the place of God, so has wisdom; and one of the greatest enemies of Deity has always been the wisdom of man. The wisdom of man will not see God. Professing themselves to be wise, wise men have become fools. But have ye not noticed, in reading history, how God has abased the pride of wisdom? In ages long gone by, he sent mighty minds into the world, who devised systems of philosophy. "These systems," they said, "will last forever." There pupils thought them infallible, and therefore wrote their sayings on enduring parchment, saying, "This book will last forever; succeeding generations of men will read it, and to the last man that book shall be handed down, as the epitome of wisdom." "Ah! but," said God, "that book of yours shall be seen to be folly, ere another hundred years have rolled away." And so the mighty thoughts of Socrates, and the wisdom of Solon, are utterly forgotten now; and could we hear them speak, the veriest child in our schools would laugh to think that he understandeth more of philosophy than they. But when man has found the vanity of one system, his eyes have sparkled at another; if Aristotle will not suffice, here is Bacon; now I shall know everything; and he sets to work and says that this new philosophy is to last forever. He lays his stones with fair colors, and he thinks that every truth he piles up is a precious imperishable truth. But, alas! another century comes, and it is found to be "wood, hay, and stubble." A new sect of philosophers rise up, who refute their predecessors. So too, we have wise men in this day — wise secularists, and so on, who fancy they have obtained the truth; but within another fifty years — and mark that word — this hair shall not be silvered over with gray, until the last of that race shall have perished, and that man shall be thought a fool that was ever connected with such a race. Systems of infidelity pass away like a dew-drop before the sun, for God says, "I am God, and beside me there is none else." This Bible is the stone that shall break in powder philosophy; this is the mighty battering ram that shall dash all systems of philosophy in pieces; this is the stone that a woman may yet hurl upon the head of every Abimelech, and he shall be utterly destroyed. O church of God! fear not; thou shalt do wonders; wise men shall be confounded, and thou shalt know, and they too, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else.

“Surely,” says one, “*the Church of God* does not need to be taught this.” Yes, we answer, she does; for of all beings, those whom God has made the objects of his grace are perhaps the most apt to forget this cardinal truth, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. How did the church in Canaan forget it, when they bowed before other gods, and therefore he brought against them mighty kings and princes, and afflicted them sore. How did Israel forget it; and he carried them away captive into Babylon. And what Israel did, in Canaan and in Babylon, that we do now. We too, too often, forget that he is God, and beside him there is none else. Doth not the Christian know what I mean, when I tell him this great fact? For hath he not done it himself? In certain times prosperity has come upon him; soft gales have blown his bark along, just where his wild will wished to steer; and he has said within himself: “Now I have peace, now I have happiness, now the object I wished for is within my grasp, now I will say, ‘Sit down, my soul, and take thy rest; eat, drink, and be merry; these things will well content me; make thou these thy God, be thou blessed and happy.’” But have we not seen our God dash the goblet to the earth, spill the sweet wine, and instead thereof fill it with gall? and as he has given it to us, he has said — “Drink it, drink it: ye have thought to find a God on earth, but drain the cup and know its bitterness.” When we have drunk it, nauseous the draft was, and we have cried, “Ah! God, I will drink no more of these things; thou art God, and beside thee there is none else.” And ah! how often, too, have we devised schemes for the future, without asking God’s permission! Men have said, like those foolish ones James mentioned, “We will do such-and-such things on the morrow; we will buy and sell and get gain.” whereas they knew not what was to be on the morrow,, for long ere the morrow came they were unable to buy and sell; death had claimed them, and a small span of earth held all their frame. God teaches his people every day, by sickness, by affliction, by depression of spirits, by the forsakings of God, by the loss of the Spirit for a season, by the lackings of the joys of his countenance, that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. And we must not forget that there are some special servants of God raised up to do good works, who in a peculiar manner have to learn this lesson. Let a man, for instance, be called to the great work of preaching the gospel. He is successful; God helped him; thousands wait at his feet, and multitudes hang upon his lips; as truly as that man is a man, he will have a tendency to be exalted above measure, and too much

will he begin to look to himself, and too little to his God. Let men speak who know, and what they know let them speak; and they will say, "It is true, it is most true." If God gives us a special mission, we generally begin to take some honor and glory to ourselves. But in review of the eminent saints of God, have you never observed how God has made them feel that he was God, and beside him there was none else? Poor Paul might have thought himself a God, and been puffed up above measure, by reason of the greatness of his revelation, had not there been a thorn in the flesh. But Paul could feel that he was not a God, for he had a thorn in the flesh, and gods *could not* have thorns in the flesh. Sometimes God teaches the minister, by denying him help on special occasions. We come up into our pulpits and say, "oh! I wish I could have a good day to-day!" We begin to labor; we have been just as earnest in prayer, and just as indefatigable; but it is like a blind horse turning round a mill, or like Samson with Delilah: we shake our vain limbs with vast surprise, "make feeble fight," and win no victories. We are made to see that the Lord is God, and that beside him there is none else. Very frequently God teaches this to the minister, leading him to see his own sinful nature. He will have such an insight into his own wicked and abominable heart, that he will feel as he comes up the pulpit stairs that he does not deserve so much as to sit in his pew, much less to preach to his fellows. Although we feel always joy in the declaration of God's Word, yet we have known what it is to totter on the pulpit steps, under a sense that the chief of sinners should scarcely be allowed to preach to others. Ah! beloved, I do not think *he* will be very successful as a minister who is not taken into the depths and blackness of his own soul, and made to exclaim, "Unto me, who am less *than the least of all saints*, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." There is another antidote which God applies in the case of ministers. If he does not deal with them personally, he raises up a host of enemies, that it may be seen that he is God, and God alone. An esteemed friend sent me, yesterday, a valuable old Ms. of one of George Whitefield's hymns which was sung on Kennington Common. It is a splendid hymn, thoroughly Whitefieldian all through. It showed that his reliance was wholly on the Lord, and that God was within him. What! will a man subject himself to the calumnies of the multitude, will he toil and work day after day unnecessarily, will he stand up Sabbath after Sabbath and preach the gospel and have his name maligned and slandered, if he has

not the grace of God in him? For myself, I can say, that were it not that the love of Christ constrained me, this hour might be the last that I should preach, so far as the ease of the thing is concerned. "Necessity is laid upon us; yea, woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel." But that opposition through which God carries his servants, leads them to see at once that he is God, and that there is none else. If every one applauded, if all were gratified, we should think ourselves God; but, when they hiss and hoot, we turn to our God, and cry,

"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproach should be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
If thou'lt remember me."

II. This brings us to the second portion of our discourse.

Salvation is God's greatest work; and, therefore, in his greatest work, he specially teaches us this lesson, That he is God, and that beside him there is none else. Our text tells us *how he teaches it*. He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He shows us that he is God, and that beside him there is none else, in three ways. First, by the person to whom he directs us: "look unto *me*, and be ye saved." Secondly, by the means he tells us to use to obtain mercy: "Look," simply, "Look." And thirdly, by the persons whom he calls to "look:" "Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth*."

1. First, *to whom does God tell us to look for salvation?* O, does it not lower the pride of man, when we hear the Lord say, "Look unto *me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth?" It is not. "Look to your priest, and be ye saved:" if you did, there would be another God, and beside him there would be some one else. It is not "Look to yourself;" if so, then there would be a being who might arrogate some of the praise of salvation. But it is "Look unto me." How frequently you who are coming to Christ look to yourselves. "O!" you say, "I do not repent enough." That is looking to yourself. "I do not believe enough." That is looking to yourself. "I am too unworthy." That is looking to yourself. "I cannot discover," says another, "that I have any righteousness." It is quite right to say that you have not any righteousness; but it is quite wrong to look for any. It is, "Look unto me." God will have you turn your eye off yourself and look unto him. The

hardest thing in the world is to turn a man's eye off himself; as long as he lives, he always has a predilection to turn his eyes inside, and look at himself; whereas God says, "Look unto me." From the cross of Calvary, where the bleeding hands of Jesus drop mercy; from the Garden of Gethsemane, where the bleeding pores of the Saviour sweat pardons, the cry comes, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." From Calvary's summit, where Jesus cries, "It is finished," I hear a shout, "Look, and be saved." But there comes a vile cry from our soul, "Nay, look to yourself! look to yourself!" Ah, my hearer, look to yourself, and you will be damned. That certainly will come of it. As long as you look to yourself there is no hope for you. It is not a consideration of what you are, but a consideration of what God is, and what Christ is, that can save you. It is looking from yourself to Jesus. P! there be men that quite misunderstand the gospel; they think that righteousness qualifies them to come to Christ; whereas sin is the only qualification for a man to come to Jesus. Good old Crisp says, "Righteousness keeps me from Christ: the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Sin makes me come to Jesus, when sin is felt; and, in coming to Christ, the more sin I have the more cause I have to hope for mercy." David said, and it was a strange thing, too, "Have mercy upon me, for mine iniquity is great." But, David, why did not you say that it was little? Because, David knew that the bigger his sins were, the better reason for asking mercy. The more vile a man is, the more eagerly I invite him to believe in Jesus. A sense of sin is all we have to look for as ministers. We preach to sinners; and let us know that a man will take the title of sinner to himself, and we then say to him, "Look unto Christ, and ye shall be saved." "Look," this is all he demands of thee, and even this he gives thee. If thou lookest to thyself thou art damned; thou art a vile miscreant, filled with loathsomeness, corrupt and corrupting others. But look thou here — seest thou that man hanging on the cross? Dost thou behold his agonized head dropping meekly down upon his breast? Dost thou see that thorny crown, causing drops of blood to trickle down his cheeks? Dost thou see his hands pierced and rent, and his blest feet, supporting the weight of his own frame, rent well-nigh in twain with the cruel nails? Sinner! dost thou hear him shriek, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabbachthani?" Dost thou hear him cry, "It is finished?" Dost thou mark his head hang down in death? Seest thou that side pierced with the spear, and the body taken from the cross? O, come thou hither! Those

hands were nailed for thee; those feet gushed gore for thee; that side was opened wide for thee; and if thou wantest to know how thou canst find mercy, there it is. “Look!” “Look unto *me!*” Look no longer to Moses. Look no longer to Sinai. Come thou here and look to Calvary, to Calvary’s victim, and to Joseph’s grave. And look thou yonder, to the man who near the throne sits with his Father, crowned with light and immortality. “Look, sinner,” he says, this morning, to you, “Look unto me, and be ye saved.” It is in this way God teaches that there is none beside him; because he makes us look entirely to him, and utterly away from ourselves.

2. But the second thought is, *the means of salvation*. It is, “Look unto me, and be ye saved.” You have often observed, I am sure, that many people are fond of an intricate worship, and involved religion, one they can hardly understand. They cannot endure worship so simple as ours. Then they must have a man dressed in white, and a man dressed in black; then they must have what they call an altar and a chancel. After a little while that will not suffice, and they must have flower-pots and candles. The clergyman then becomes a priest, and he must have a variegated dress, with a cross on it. So it goes on; what is simply a plate becomes a paten, and what was once a cup becomes a chalice; and the more complicated the ceremonies are, the better they like them. They like their minister to stand like a superior being. The world likes a religion they cannot comprehend. But have you never noticed how gloriously simple the Bible is? It will not have any of your nonsense; it speaks plain, and nothing but plain things. “*Look!*” There is not an unconverted man who likes this, “Look unto Christ, and be ye saved.” No, he comes to Christ like Naaman to Elijah; and, when it is said, “Go, wash in Jordan,” he replies, “I verily thought he would come and put his hand on the place, and call on the name of his God. But the idea of telling me to wash in Jordan, what a ridiculous thing! Anybody could do that!” If the prophet had bidden him to do some great thing, would he not have done it? Ah! certainly he would. And if, this morning, I could preach that any one who walked from here to Bath without his shoes and stockings, or did some impossible thing, should be saved, you would start off tomorrow morning before breakfast. If it would take me seven years to describe the way of salvation, I am sure you would all long to hear it. If only one learned doctor could tell the way to heaven, how would he be run after! And if it were in hard words, with a few scraps of Latin and Greek, it would be all the better. But it is a simple gospel that

we have to preach. It is only “Look!” “Ah!” you say, “Is that the gospel? I shall not pay any attention to that.” But why has God ordered you to do such a simple thing? Just to take down your pride, and to show you that he is God, and that beside him there is none else. O, mark how simple the way of salvation is. It is “Look! look! look!” Four letters, and two of them alike! “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Some divines want a week to tell what you are to do to be saved; but God the Holy Ghost only wants four letters to do it. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” How simple is that way of salvation! and O, how instantaneous! It takes us some time to move our hand, buy a look does not require a moment. So a sinner believes in a moment; and the moment that sinner believes and trusts in his crucified God for pardon, at once he receives salvation in full through his blood. There may be one that came in here this morning unjustified in his conscience, that will go out justified rather than others. There may be some here, filthy sinners one moment, pardoned the next. It is done in an instant. “Look! look! look!” And how universal it is! Because, wherever I am, however far off, it just says, “Look!” It does not say I am to see; it only says, “Look!” If we look on a thing in the dark, we cannot see it; but we have done what we were told. So, if a sinner only looks to Jesus he will save him; for Jesus in the dark is as good as Jesus in the light; and Jesus, when you cannot see him, is as good as Jesus when you can. It is only, “Look!” “Ah! says one, “I have been trying to see Jesus this year, but I have not seen him.” It does not say, see him, but “Look unto him.” And it says that they who looked were enlightened. If there is an obstacle before you, and you only look in the right direction, it is sufficient. “Look unto me.” It is not seeing Christ so much as looking after him. The will after Christ, the wish after Christ, the desire after Christ, the trusting in Christ, the hanging on Christ, that is what is wanted. “Look! look! look!” Ah! if the man bitten by the serpent had turned his sightless eyeballs towards the brazen serpent, though he had not seen it, he would still have had his life restored. It is looking, not seeing, that saves the sinner.

We say again, how this *humbles* a man! There is a gentleman who says, “Well, if it had been a thousand pounds that would have saved me, I would have thought nothing of it.” But gold and silver is cankered; it is good for nothing. “Then, am I to be saved just the same as my servant Betty?” Yes, just the same; there is no other way of salvation for you. That is to show

man that Jehovah is God, and that beside him there is none else. The wise man says, "If it had been to work the most wonderful problem, or to solve the greatest mystery, I would have done it. May I not have some mysterious gospel? May I not believe in some mysterious religion?" No; it is "Look!" "What! am I to be saved just like that Ragged School Boy, who can't read his letters?" Yes, you must, or you will not be saved at all. Another says, "I have been very moral and upright; I have observed all the laws of the land; and, if there is anything else to do, I will do it. I will eat only fish on Fridays, and keep all the fasts of the church, if that will save me." No, sir, that will not save you; your good works are good for nothing. "What! must I be saved in the same way as a harlot or a drunkard?" Yes, sir; there is only one way of salvation for all. "He hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." He hath passed a sentence of condemnation on all, that the free grace of God might come upon many to salvation. "Look! look! look!" This is the simple method of salvation. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

But, lastly, mark how God has cut down the pride of man, and has exalted himself *by the persons whom he has called to look*. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." When the Jew heard Isaiah say that, "Ah!" he exclaimed, "you ought to have said, 'Look unto me, O Jerusalem, and be saved.' That would have been right. But those Gentile dogs, are they to look and be saved?" "Yes," says God; "I will show you Jews, that, though I have given you many privileges, I will exalt others above you; I can do as I will with my own."

Now, who are the ends of the earth? Why, there are poor heathen nations now that are very few degrees removed from brutes, uncivilized and untaught; but if I might go and tread the desert, and find the Bushman in his kraal, or go to the South Seas and find a cannibal, I would say to the cannibal or the Bushman, "Look unto Jesus, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." They are some of "the ends of the earth," and the gospel is sent to as much to them as to the polite Grecians, the refined Romans, or the educated Britons. But I think "the ends of the earth" imply those who have gone the farthest away from Christ. I say, drunkard, that means you. You have been staggering back, till you have got right to the ends of the earth; you have almost had *delirium tremens*; you cannot be much worse. There is not a man breathing worse than you. *Is there?* Ah! but God, in

order to humble your pride, says to you, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." There is another who has lived a life of infamy and sin, until she has ruined herself, and even Satan seems to sweep her out at the back door; but God says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Methinks I see one trembling here, and saying, "Ah, I have not been one of these, sir, but I have been something worse; for I have attended the house of God, and I have stifled convictions, and put off all thoughts of Jesus, and now I think he will never have mercy on me." You are one of them. "Ends of the earth!" So long as I find any who feel like that, I can tell them that they are "the ends of the earth." "But," says another, "I am so peculiar; if I did not feel as I do, it would be all very well; but I feel that my case is a peculiar one." That is all right; they are a peculiar people. You will do. But another one says, "There is nobody in the world like me; I do not think you will find a being under the sun that has had so many calls, and put them all away, and so many sins on his head. Besides, I have guilt that I should not like to confess to any living creature." One of "the ends of the earth" again; therefore, all I have to do is to cry out, in the Master's name, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." But thou sayest, sin will not let thee look. I tell thee, sin will be removed the moment thou dost look. *"But I dare not; he will condemn me; I fear to look."* He will condemn thee more if thou dost not look. Fear, then, and look; but do not let thy fearing keep thee from looking. *"But he will cast me out."* Try him. *"But I cannot see him."* I tell you, it is not seeing, but looking. *"But my eyes are so fixed on the earth, so earthly, so worldly."* Ah! but, poor soul, he giveth power to look and live. He saith, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Take this, dear friends, for a new year's text, both ye who love the Lord, and ye who are only looking for the first time. Christian! in all thy troubles through this year, look unto God and be saved. In all thy trials and afflictions, look unto Christ, and find deliverance. In all thine agony, poor soul, in all thy repentance for thy guilt, look unto Christ, and find pardon. This year, remember to put thine eyes heavenward, and thine heart heavenward, too. Remember, this day, that thou bind round thyself a golden chain, and put one link of it in the staple of heaven. Look unto Christ; fear not. There is no stumbling when a man walks with his eyes up to Jesus. He that looked at the stars fell into the ditch; but he that looks at

Christ walks safely. Keep your eyes up all the year long. “Look unto *him*, and be ye saved;” and remember that “*he* is God, and beside *him* there is none else.” And thou, poor trembler, what sayest thou? Wilt thou begin the year by looking unto him? You know how sinful you are this morning; you know how filthy you are; and yet it is possible that, before you open your pew door, and get into the aisle, you will be as justified as the apostles before the throne of God. It is possible that, ere you foot treads the threshold of your door, you will have lost the burden that has been on your back, and you will go on your way, singing, “I am forgiven, I am forgiven; I am a miracle of grace; this day is my spiritual birthday.” O, that it might be such to many of you, that at last I might say, “Here am I, and the children thou hast given me.” Hear this, convinced sinner! “This poor man cried, and the Lord delivered him out of his distresses.” O, taste and see that the Lord is good! Now believe on him; now cast thy guilty soul upon his righteousness; now plunge thy black soul into the bath of his blood; now put thy naked soul at the door of the wardrobe of his righteousness; now seat thy famished soul at the feast of plenty. Now, “Look!” How simple does it seem! And yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring men to. They never will do it, till constraining grace makes them. Yet there it is, “Look!” Go thou away with that thought. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

LOVE'S COMMENDATION

A Sermon

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 23, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

— Romans 5:8

I shall have nothing new to tell you; it will be as old as the everlasting hills, and so simple that a child may understand it. Love's commendation. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” God's commendation of himself and of his love is not in words, but in deeds. When the Almighty God would commend his love to poor man, it is not written, “God commendeth his love towards us in an eloquent oration”; it is not written that he commendeth his love by winning professions; but he commendeth his love toward us by an act, by a deed; a surprising deed, the unutterable grace of which eternity itself shall scarce discover. He “commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Let us learn, then upon the threshold of our text, that if we would commend ourselves it must be by deeds, and not by words. Men may talk fairly, and think that thus they shall win esteem; they may order their words aright, and think that so they shall command respect; but let them remember, it is not the wordy oratory of the tongue, but the more powerful eloquence of the hand which wins the affection of “the world's great heart.” If thou wouldst commend thyself to thy fellows, go and *do* — not go and *say*; if thou wouldst win honour from the excellent, talk not, but *act*; and if before God thou wouldst show that thy faith is sincere, and thy love to him real:

remember, it is no fawning words, uttered either in prayer or praise, but it is the pious deed, the holy act, which is the justification of thy faith, and the proof that it is the faith of God's elect. Doing, not saying — acting, not talking — these are the things which commend a man.

“No big words of ready talkers,
No fine boastings will suffice;
Broken hearts and humble walkers,
These are dear in Jesus' eyes.”

Let us imitate God, then, in this. If we would commend our religion to mankind, we cannot do it by mere formalities, but by gracious acts of integrity, charity and forgiveness, which are the proper discoveries of grace within. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” “Let your conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ;” and so shall you honour him, and “adorn the doctrine” which you profess.

But now for this mighty deed whereby God commended his love. We think that it is twofold. We believe the apostle has given us a double commendation of love. The first is, “*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, Christ died for us*”; the second commendation arises from our condition, “*In that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*”

I. The first commendation of love, then, is this — that “CHRIST DIED FOR US”;

and as the whole text is double, so this sentence also contains a twofold commendation. There is a commendation of love in the person who died — *Christ*; and then in the act which he performed — “*Christ died for us.*”

First, then, it is the highest commendation of love, *that it was CHRIST* who died for us. When sinful man erred from his Maker, it was necessary that God should punish his sin. He had sworn by himself, “The soul that sinneth it shall die;” and God — with reverence to his all-holy name be it spoken — could not swerve from what he had said. He had declared on Sinai that he would by no means clear the guilty; but inasmuch as he desired to pardon the offending, it was necessary that some one else should bear the sufferings which the guilty ought to have endured, that so by the vicarious substitution of another, God might be “just, and yet the

justifier of the ungodly.” Now, the question might have arisen, “Who is he that shall be the scapegoat for man’s offence? Who is he that shall bear his transgressions and take away his sins?” If I might be allowed to picture in my imagination (and mark, it is nothing more than imagination), I could almost conceive a parliament in heaven. The angels are assembled; the question is proposed to them: — “Cherubim and seraphim, cohorts of the glorified, ye spirits that like flames of fire, swift at my bidding fly; ye happy beings, whom I have created for my honour! here is a question which I condescend to offer for your consideration: — Man has sinned; there is no way for his pardon but by some one suffering and paying blood for blood. Who shall it be?” I can conceive that there was silence throughout the august assembly. Gabriel spoke not: he would have stretched his wings and flapped the ether in a moment, if the deed had been possible; but he felt that he could never bear the guilt of a world upon his shoulders, and, therefore, still he sat. And there the mightiest of the mighty, those who could shake a world if God should will it, sat still, because they felt all powerless to accomplish redemption. I do not conceive that one of them would have ventured to hope that *God himself* would assume flesh and die. I do not think it could have entered even into angelic thought to conceive that the mighty Maker of the skies should bow his awful head and sink into a grave. I cannot imagine that the brightest and most seraphic of these glorified ones would for an instant have suffered such a thought to abide with him. And when the Son of God, upstarting from his throne, spoke to them and said, “Principalities and powers! I will become flesh, I will veil this Godhead of mine in robes of mortal clay, I will die!” — I think I see the angels for once astonished. They had seen worlds created; they had beheld the earth, like a spark from the incandescent mass of unformed matter, hammered from the anvil of Omnipotence, and smitten off into space; and yet they had not wondered. But on this occasion I conceive that they ceased not to marvel. “What! wilt thou die, O Word! Creator! Master! Infinite! Almighty! wilt thou become a man and die?” “Yes,” saith the Saviour, “I will.” And are you not astonished, mortal men? Do you not wonder? What, will *you* not marvel? The hosts of heaven still are wondering. Though it is many an age since they heard it, they have not yet ceased to admire; and do not you *begin* to marvel yet? Shall the theme which stirs the marvel of the seraph not move your hearts? That God himself should become man, and then should die

for you! “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *Christ* should die. Roll that thought over in your mind; ponder it in your meditations; weigh it in your hearts. If ye have right ideas of Godhead, if ye know what Christ is, if ye can conceive him who is the everlasting God, and yet the man — if ye can picture him, the pure, holy, perfect creature, and yet the everlasting Creator — if ye can conceive of him as the man who was wounded, and yet the God who was exalted for ever — if ye can picture him as the Maker of all worlds, as the Lord of providence, by whom all things exist and consist — if ye can conceive of him now, as robed in splendor, surrounded with the choral symphonies of myriads of angels, then perhaps ye may guess how deep was that stride of condescension, when he stepped from heaven to earth, from earth into the grave, from the grave down, it is said, into the lowest “*sheol*,” that he might make his condescension perfect and complete. “He hath commended his love” to you, my brethren, in that it was Christ, the Son of God, who died for us.

The second part of the first commendation lieth here, that Christ *died for us*. It was much love when Christ became man for us, when he stripped himself of the glories of his Godhead for awhile, to become an infant of a span long, slumbering in the manger of Bethlehem. It was no little condescension when he divested himself of all his glories, hung his mantle on the sky, gave up his diadem and the pleasures of his throne, and stooped to become flesh. It was moreover, no small love when he lived a holy and a suffering life for us; it was love amazing, when God with feet of flesh did tread the earth, and teach his own creatures how to live, all the while bearing their scoffs and jests with cool unangered endurance. It was no little favour of him that he should condescend to give us a perfect example by his spotless life; but the commendation of love lieth here — not that Christ *lived* for us, but that Christ *died for us*.

Come, dear hearers, for a moment weigh those words. “Christ *died* for us!” Oh, how we love those brave defenders of our nation who but lately died for us in a far-off land! Some of us showed our sympathy to their sons and daughters, their wives and children, by contributing to support them, when the fathers were laid low. We feel that the wounded soldier is a friend to us, and that we are his debtors for ever. We may not love war; we may not, some of us, think it a Christian act to wield the sword; but, nevertheless, I am sure we love the men who sought to defend our country

with their lives, and who died in our cause. We would drop a tear over the silent graves of Balaclava, if we were there now. And, if it should ever come to pass that any one of them should be called to die for us, should we not henceforth love them? Do any of us know what is contained in that great word “die?” Can we measure it? Can we tell its depths of suffering or its heights of agony? “Died for us!” Some of you have seen death; you know how great and dread is its power; you have seen the strong man bowing down, his knees quivering; you have beheld the eyestrings break, and seen the eyeballs glazed in death; you have marked the torture and the agonies which appal men in their dying hours; and you have said, “Ah! it is a solemn and an awful thing to die.” But, my hearers, “Christ *died for us*.” All that death could mean Christ endured; he yielded up the ghost, he resigned his breath; he became a lifeless corpse, and his body was interred, even like the bodies of the rest that died. “Christ died for us.”

Consider the circumstances which attended his death. It was no common death he died; it was a death of ignominy, for he was put to death by a legal slaughter; it was a death of unutterable pain, for he was crucified; and what more painful fate than to die nailed to a cross? It was a long protracted death, for he hung for hours, with only his hands and his feet pierced — parts which are far away from the seat of life, but in which are situated the most tender nerves, full of sensibility. He suffered a death which for its circumstances still remain unparalleled. It was no speedy blow which crushed the life out of the body, and ended it; but it was a lingering, long, and doleful death, attended with no comforts and no sympathy, but surrounded with scorn and contempt. Picture him! They have hurled him on his back; they have driven nails through his hands and his feet; they have lifted him up. See! They have dashed the cross into its place. It is fixed. And now behold him! Mark his eyes, all full of tears; behold his head, hanging on his breast. Ah! mark him, he seems all silently to say, “I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; I am brought into the dust of death.” Hear him, when he groans, “I thirst.” Above all, listen to him, whilst he cries, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” My words cannot picture him; my thoughts fail to express it. No painter ever accomplished it, nor shall any speaker be able to perform it. Yet I beseech you regard the Royal Sufferer. See him, with the eye of your faith, hanging on the bloody tree. Hear him cry, before he dies, “It is finished!”

“See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

Oh! how i wish I could stir you! If I should tell you some silly story of a love-sick maid, ye would weep; if I should turn novelist, and give you some sad account of a fabled hero who had died in pain — if it were a fiction, I should have your hearts; but this is a dread and solemn reality, and one with which you are intimately connected, for all this was done for as many of you as sincerely repent of your sins.

“All ye that pass by,
to Jesus draw nigh:
To you is it nothing
that Jesus should die?”

Bethink you, that if you are saved, it is something to you, for the blood which trickles from his hands, distils for *you*. That frame which writhes in torture writhes for *you*; those knees, so weak with pain, are weak for you; those eyes, dripping with showers of tears, do drop for you. Ah! think of him, then, ye who have faith in him; look to him, and as many of you as have not yet believed, I will pray for you, that ye may now behold him as the expiation of your guilt; as the key which opens heaven to all believers.

Our second point was this: “God commendeth his love towards us,” not only because Christ died for us, but that CHRIST DIED FOR US WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS.”

Let us for a moment consider what sort of sinners many of us have been, and then we shall see it was marvellous grace that Christ should die for men — not as penitents”but as sinners. Consider how many of us have been *continual* sinners. We have not sinned once, nor twice, but ten thousand times. Our life, however upright and moral it has been, is stained by a succession of sins. If we have not revolted against God in the outward acts which proclaim the profligate to be a great sinner, yet the thoughts of our heart and the words of our lips are swift witnesses against us that we have continually transgressed. And oh! my brethren, who is there among us who will not likewise confess to sins of act? Who among us has not broken the Sabbath-day? Who among us has not taken God’s name in

vain? Who of us shall dare to say that we have loved the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength? Have we never by any act whatsoever showed that we have coveted our neighbour's goods? Verily, I know we have; we have broken his commands, and it is well for us to join in that general confession — “We have done those things which we ought not to have done; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us.” Now, the sweet thought is, that Christ died for us, whilst he knew that we should be continual transgressors. Men, brethren, and fathers, he did not die for you as those who have committed but one fault, but as those who were emphatically “sinners;” sinners of years’ standing; some of you sinners with grey heads; sinners who have persevered in a constant course of iniquity. As sinners we are redeemed, and by it we become saints. Does not this commend Christ’s love to us, that he should die for sinners, who have dyed themselves with sin as with crimson and with scarlet; great and continual sinners.

Note again, he has died for us, although our sins were *aggravated*. Oh! there are some of us here who are great sinners — not so much in the acts we have performed, as in the aggravation of our guilt. I reckon that when I sin, I sin worse than many of you, because I sin against better training than many of my hearers received in their youth. Many of you, when you sin, sin against faithful ministers, and against the most earnest warnings. It has been your wont to sit under truthful pastors; you have often been told of your sins. Remember, sirs, when you sin you do not sin so cheap as others: when you sin against the convictions of your consciences, against the solemn monitions of your pastors, you sin more grossly than others do. The Hottentot sinneth not as the Briton doth. He who has been brought up in this land may be openly more righteous, but he may be inwardly more wicked, for he sins against more knowledge. But even for such Christ died — for men who have sinned against the wooings of his love, against the strivings of their consciences, against the invitations of his Word, against the warnings of his providence — even for such Christ died, and therein he commendeth his love towards us, that he died for sinners. My hearer, if thou hast so sinned, do not therefore despair, it may be he will yet make thee rejoice in his redemption.

Reflect again, When we were sinners, *we were sinners against the very person who died for us*. “Tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis wonderful,” that the very Christ against whom we have sinned died for us. If a man should be injured in the street, if a punishment should be demanded of the person who attacked him, it would be passing strange if the injured man should for love’s sake bear the penalty, that the other might go free; but ‘twas so with Christ. He had been injured, yet he suffers for the very injury that others did to him. He dies for his enemies — dies for the men that hate and scorn him. There is an old tradition, that the very man who pierced Christ’s side was converted; and I sometimes think that peradventure in heaven we shall meet with those very men who drove the nails into his hands and pierced his side. Love is a mighty thing; it can forgive great transgressors. I know my Master said, “Begin at Jerusalem,” and I think he said that because there lived the men who had crucified him, and he wanted them to be saved. My hearer, hast thou ever blasphemed Christ? Hast thou ever mocked him, and scoffed at his people? Hast thou done all thou couldst to emulate the example of those who spat in his holy face? Dost thou repent of it? Dost thou feel thou needst a Saviour? Then I tell thee, in Christ’s name, he is *thy* Saviour; yes, *thy* Saviour, though thus hast insulted him — *thy* Saviour, though thou hast trampled on him — *thy* Saviour though thou hast spoken evil of his people, his day, his Word, and his gospel.

Once more, let us remember, that many of us as sinners have been persons who for a long time have heard this good news, and yet *have despised it*. Perhaps there is nothing more wonderful in the depravity of man than that it is able to forget the love of Christ. If we were not so sinful as we are, there is not one of us here this morning who would not weep at the thought of the Saviour’s love, and I believe there is not a solitary man, woman, or child here, who would not say, “I love thee, O my God! because thou hast done so much for me.” It is the highest proof of our depravity that we do not at once love the Christ who died for us. There is a story told of the covenanters — of one named Patrick Welwood — whose house was surrounded at a time when a minister had for security been hidden there. Claverhouse’s dragoons were at the door, and the minister had fled. The master of the house was summoned, and it was demanded of him, “Where is the minister?” “He is gone; I cannot tell whither, for I know not.” But they were not satisfied with that; they

tortured him, and since he could not tell them where he was (for in reality he did not know), they left him, after inflicting upon him the torture of the thumbscrew; and they took his sister, a young girl who was living in the house. I believe she did know where the minister was concealed; but on taking her they asked her, and she said, "No, I can die myself, but I can never betray God's servant, and never will, as he may help me." They dragged her to the water's edge, and making her kneel down, they determined to put her to death. But the captain said, "Not yet; we will try to frighten her"; and sending a soldier to her, he knelt down, and applying a pistol to her ear, she was bidden to betray the minister or die. The click of the pistol was heard in her ear, but the pistol was not loaded. She slightly shivered, and the question was again asked of her. "Tell us now," said they, "where he is, or we will have your life." "Never, never," said she. A second time the endeavour was made; this time a couple of carabines were discharged, but into the air, in order to terrify her. At last they resolved upon really putting her to death, when Trail, the minister, who was hidden somewhere near, being aroused by the discharge of guns, and seeing the poor girl about to die for him, sprang forward, and cried, "Spare that maiden's blood, and take mine; this poor innocent girl, what hath she done?" The poor girl was dead even there with the fright, but the minister had come prepared to die himself, to save her life. Oh, my friends, I have sometimes thought that her heroic martyrdom was somewhat like the blessed Jesus. He comes to us, and says, "Poor sinner, wilt thou be my friend?" We answer, "No," He comes to us, and says, "Ah, I will make thee so," saith he, "I will die for thee"; and he goes to die on the cross. Oh! methinks I could spring forward and say, "Nay, Lord Jesus, nay, thou must not die for such a worm." Surely such a sacrifice is a price too large to pay for poor sinful worms! And yet, my hearers, to return again to what I have uttered before, you will hear all this, and nine out of ten will retire from this place, and say, "It was an old, old story"; and while ye can drop a tear for aught else, ye will not weep one tear for Jesus, nor sigh one sigh for him, nor will ye afford him even a faint emotion of love. Would it were different! Would to God he would change your hearts, that so ye might be brought to love him.

Further, to illustrate my text, let me remark again, that inasmuch as Christ died for sinners, it is a special commendation of his love for the following reasons: — It is quite certain that God did not consider *man's merit* when

Christ died; in fact, no merit could have deserved the death of Jesus. Though we had been holy as Adam, we could never have deserved a sacrifice like that of Jesus for us. But inasmuch as it says, “He died for sinners,” we are thereby taught that God considered our sin, and not our righteousness. When Christ died, he died for men as black, as wicked, as abominable, not as good and excellent. Christ did not shed his blood for us as saints, but as sinners. He considered us in our loathsomeness, in our low estate and misery — not in that high estate to which grace afterwards elevates us, but in all the decay into which we had fallen by our sin. There could have been no merit in us; and therefore, God commendeth his love by our ill desert.

Again: it is quite certain, because Christ died for us as sinners, that God had *no interest* to serve by sending his Son to die. How could sinners serve him? Oh! if God had pleased, he might have crushed this nest of rebels, and have made another world all holy. If God had chosen, the moment that man sinned he might have said unto the world, “Thou shalt be burned”; and like as a few years ago astronomers told us that they saw the light of a far-off world burning, myriads of miles away, this world might have been consumed with burning heat, and sin scorched out of its clay. But no. Whilst God could have made another race of beings, and could have either annihilated us, or consigned us to eternal torment, he was pleased to veil himself in flesh, and die for us. Surely then it could not have been from any motive of self-interest. God had nothing to get by man’s salvation. What are the attractions of human voices in Paradise. What are the feeble symphonies which mortal lips can sing on earth, compared with the death of our Lord? He had angels enough. Do they not day without night circle his throne rejoicing? Are not their golden harps sufficient? Is not the orchestra of heaven large enough? Must our glorious Lord give up his blood to buy poor worms, that they may join their little notes with the great swell of a choral universe? Yes, he must; and inasmuch as we are sinners, and could by no possibility repay him for his kindness, “God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

But there is another commendation of love. Christ died for us “unasked.” Christ did not consider me as an awakened heir of heaven, but as a dead, corrupt, lost, and ruined heir of hell. If he had died for me as an awakened

heir of heaven, then I could have prayed for him to die, for then I have power to pray, and will to pray; but Christ died for me when I had no power nor will to lift my voice in prayer to him. It was entirely unasked. Where did ye ever hear that man was first in mercy? Did man ask God to redeem? Nay, rather, it is almost the other way; it is as if God did entreat man to be redeemed. Man never asked that he might be pardoned, but God pardons him, and then turns round and cries, "Return unto me, backsliding children of men, and I will have mercy upon you." Sinners! if you should go down on your knees, and were for months to cry for mercy, it would be great mercy if mercy should look upon you; but without asking, when we are hardened and rebellious, when we will not turn to Christ, he still comes to die for us. Tell it in heaven; tell it in the lower world! God's amazing work surpasses thought; for love itself did die for hatred — holiness did crucify itself to save poor sinful men, and unasked for and unsought, like a fountain in the desert sparkling spontaneously with its native waters, Jesus Christ came to die for man, who would not seek his grace. "God commendeth his love towards us."

And now, my dear hearers, I want to close up, if the Spirit of God will help me, by endeavouring to commend God's love to you, as much as ever I can, and inviting as many of you as feel your need of a Saviour, to lay hold of him and embrace him now as your all-sufficient sacrifice. Sinner! I can commend Christ to thee for this reason: *I know that thou needest him*. Thou mayest be ignorant of it thyself, but thou dost need him. Thou hast a leprosy within thine heart — thou needest a physician; thou sayest, "I am rich;" but sinner, thou art not — thou art naked, and poor, and miserable. Thou sayest, "I shall stand before God accepted at last"; but, sinner, without Christ thou wilt not; for whosoever believeth not on Christ "hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Hear that, my dear hearers: "The wrath of God abideth on him." Oh! that wrath of God! Sinner, thou needest Christ, even though thou dost not think so. Oh, that the Lord would impress this upon thee! Again, a day is coming when *thou wilt feel thy need* of Christ if thou dost not now. Within a few short years, perhaps months or days, thou wilt lie upon the last bed that shall ever bear thy weight; soon thou shalt be stayed up by soft pillows; thy frame will be weak, and thy soul full of sorrow. Thou mayest *live* without Christ now, but it will be hard work to *die* without him. Thou mayest do without this bridge here; but when thou gettest to the river thou wilt think thyself a

fool to have laughed at the only bridge which can carry thee safely over. Thou mayest despise Christ now, but what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan. Canst thou face death, and not be afraid? Nay, man, thou art affrighted now if the cholera is in the city; or if some little sickness is about thee thou shakest for fear; what wilt thou do when thou art in the jaws of death, when his bony hand is squeezing thee, and when his dart is in thy vitals? What wilt thou do then without a Saviour? Ah! thou wilt want him then. And what wilt thou do when thou hast passed that black stream, when thou findest thyself in the realm of spirits — in that day of judgment, when the thunders shall be loosed, and the wings of the lightning shall be unbound — when tempests shall herald with trumpet voice the arrival of the great Assize? What wilt thou do when thou shalt stand before *his* bar before whom, in astonishment, the stars shall flee, the mountains quake, and the sea be licked up with tongues of forked flame? What wilt thou do, when from his throne he shall exclaim, “Come hither, sinner,” and thou shalt stand there alone, to be judged for every deed done in the body? Thou wilt turn thine head, and say, “Oh! for an advocate!” And he shall look on thee, and say, “I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; I also will now laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.” Ah! what wilt thou do then sinner, when the judgment-seat is set? Oh! there will be weeping — there will be weeping at the judgment-seat of Christ. And what wilt thou do in that day when he shall say, “Depart, ye cursed;” and when the black angel, with a countenance more fierce than lightening, and with a voice louder than ten thousand thunders, shall cry, “Depart!” and smite thee down where lie for ever those accursed spirits, bound in fetters of iron, who, long long ago, were cast into perdition? Say not, I tell thee terrible things: if it be terrible to speak of, how terrible it must be to bear! If you believe not what I say, I shall not wonder if you laugh at me; but as the most of you believe this, I claim your most solemn attention to this subject.

Sirs! Do ye believe there is a hell, *and that you are going there?* And yet do you still march heedless on? Do you believe that beyond you, when the stream of life is ended, there is a black gulf of misery? and do you still sail downwards to it, quaffing still your glass of happiness, still merry as the live-long day? O stay, poor sinner, stay! Stay! It may be the last moment thou wilt ever have the opportunity to stay in. Therefore stay now I beseech thee. And if thou knowest thyself to be lost and ruined, if the

Holy Spirit has humbled thee and made thee feel thy sin, let me tell thee how thou shalt be saved. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved. "He that believeth not," saith the Scripture "shall be *damned*." Do you not like that message? Ought I to have said another word instead of that? If you wish it, I shall not; what God says I will say; far be it from me to alter the messages from the Most High; I will, if he help me, declare his truth without altering. He saith "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." What is it to believe? To tell you as simply as possible: to believe is to give up trusting in yourself and to trust in Jesus Christ as your Saviour. The negro said, you know, "Massa dis here is how I believe — when I see a promise, I do not stand on de promise; but I say, dat promise firm and strong; I fall flat on it; if de promise will not bear me, den it is de promise fault; but I fall flat on it." Now, that is faith. Christ says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Faith is to say, "Well, then, sink or swim, that is my only hope; lost or saved, that is my only refuge. I am resolved, for this my last defence,

‘If I perish there and die,
At his cross I still will lie’."

"*What!*" says one, "*no good works?*" Good works will come afterwards, but they do not go with it. You must come to Christ, not with your good works, but with your sins; and coming with your sins, he will take them away, and give you good works afterwards. After you believe, there will be good works as the effect of your faith; but if you think faith will be the effect of good works, you are mistaken. It is "believe and live." Cowper calls them the soul-quickenings words, "*believe and live*." This is the sum and substance of the gospel.

Now, do any of you say this is not the gospel? I shall ask you one day what it is. Is not this the doctrine Whitfield preached? Pray what else did Luther thunder, when he shook the Vatican? what else was proclaimed by Augustine and Chrysostom, but this one doctrine of salvation in Christ by faith alone? And what did Paul write? Turn ye to his epistles. And what did our Saviour himself say, when he left these words on record — "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?" And what did he command his disciples to teach

them? To teach them this. The very words I have now repeated to you were his last commission. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

But again you say, "How can I believe that Christ died for me?" Why, thus, — He says he died for sinners: canst thou say thou art a sinner? I do not mean with that fine complimentary phrase which many of you use, when you say, "*Yes, I am a sinner;*" and if I sit down to ask you, "Did you break that commandment?" "*Oh, no,*" you will say: "Did you commit that offence?" "*Oh, no;*" you never did anything wrong. And yet you are sinners. Now that is the sort of sinners I do not think I shall preach to. The sort of sinners I would call to repentance are those whom Christ invited — those who know that they have been guilty, vile, and lost. If thou knowest thy sinnership, so truly Christ died for thee. Remember that striking saying of Luther. Luther says, Satan once came to him and said, "Martin Luther, thou art lost, for thou art a sinner." Said I to him, "Satan, I thank thee for saying I am a sinner, for inasmuch as thou sayest I am a sinner, I answer thee thus — Christ died for sinners; and if Martin Luther is a sinner, Christ died for him." Now, canst thou lay hold on that, my hearer? It is not on my authority, but on God's authority. Go away and rejoice; for if thou be the chief of sinners thou shalt be saved, if thou believest.

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.
Bold shall I stand in that great day.
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, thro' thy blood, absolv'd I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Sing that, poor soul, and thou hast begun to sing the song of Paradise. May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, apply these simple statements of truth to the salvation of your souls.

THE SONS OF GOD

A Sermon

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 7th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

— Romans 8:16, 17

My brethren, what a contrast there is between the present and future estate of the child of God! The believer is here the brother to the worm; in heaven he shall be next of kin to the angels. Here he is covered with the sweat and dust which he acquired by Adam's fall; there his brow shall be bright with the immortality which is conferred upon him by the resurrection of Christ. Here the heir of heaven is unknown; he is in disguise, full often clad in the habiliments of poverty, but there his princely character shall be discerned and acknowledged, he shall be waited upon by angels, and shall share in the admiration which the universe shall pour upon the glorified Redeemer. Well said our poet just now,

“It doth not yet appear, how great we must be made.”

I think I need not remind you of your condition here below; you are too conversant with it, being hourly fretted with troubles, vexed with your own infirmities, with the temptations of Satan, and with all the allurements of this world. You are quite conscious that this is not your rest. There are too many thorns in your nest, to permit you to hope for an abiding city

below the skies. I say, it is utterly needless for me to refresh your memories about your present condition; but I feel it will be a good and profitable work if I remind you that there are high privileges of which you are possessors even now; there are divine joys which even this day you may taste. The wilderness has its manna; the desert is gladdened with water from the rock. God hath not forsaken us; the tokens of his goodness are with us, and we may rejoice in full many a gracious boon which is ours this very day. I shall direct your joyous attention to one precious jewel in your treasury, namely, your adoption into the family of God.

There are four things of which I shall speak this morning. First, *a special privilege*; second, *a special proof of it*, the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; then thirdly, *a special privilege*, that of heirship; and fourthly, the practical part of the sermon and the conclusion shall be *a special manner of life demanded of such persons*.

I. First, then, my brethren, a SPECIAL PRIVILEGE mentioned in the text. “*We are the children of God.*” And here I am met upon the very threshold by the opposition of certain modern theologians, who hold that sonship is not the special and peculiar privilege of believers. The newly discovered negative theology, which, I fear, has done some damage to the Baptist denomination, and a very large amount of injury to the Independent body — the new heresy is to a large degree, founded upon the fiction of the Universal Fatherhood of God. The old divines, the Puritans, the Reformers, are now in these last days, to be superseded by men whose teaching flatly contradicts all that we have received of our forefathers. Our old ministers have all represented God as being *to his people* a father, to the rest of the world a judge. This is styled by our new philosophers as old cumbersome scheme of theology, and it is proposed that it be swept away — a proposition which will never be carried out, while the earth remaineth, or while God endureth. But, at any rate, certain knight-errants have set themselves to do battle with windmills, and really believe that they shall actually destroy from the face of the earth that which is a fundamental and abiding distinction, without which the Scriptures are not to be understood. We are told by modern false prophets, that God in everything acts to all men as a father, even when he cast them into the lake of fire, and send upon them all the plagues that are written in his book. All these terrible things in righteousness, the awful proofs of holy vengeance

in the judge of all the earth, and successfully neutralized in their arousing effect, by being quietly written among the loving acts and words of the Universal Father. It is dreamed that this is an age when men do not need to be thundered at; when everybody is become so tender-hearted that there is no need for the sword to be held “in terrorum” over mortals; but that everything is to be conducted now in a new and refined manner; God the Universal Father, and all men universal sons. Now I must confess there is something very pretty about this theory, something so fascinating that I do not wonder that some of the ablest minds have been wooed and won by it. I, for my part, take only one objection to it, which is that it is perfectly untrue and utterly unfounded, having not the lightest shadow of a pretence of being proved by the Word of God. Scripture everywhere represents the chosen people of the Lord, under their visible character of believers, penitents, and spiritual men, as being “the children of God,” and to none but such is that holy title given. It speaks of the regenerate, of a special class me as having a claim to be God’s children. Now, as there is nothing like Scripture, let me read you a few texts, Romans 8:14. — “As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Surely no one is so daring as to say, that all men are led by the Spirit of God; yet may it readily enough be inferred from our text, that those who are not led by the Spirit of God are not the sons of God, but that they and they alone who are led, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, are the sons of God. A passage from Galatians iii. 26. — “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” declaring as it seems to me, and rightly enough, that all believers, all who have faith in Christ are the children of God, and that they become actually and manifestly so by faith in Christ Jesus, and implying that those who have no faith in Christ Jesus, are not God’s sons, and that any pretence which they could make to that relationship would be but arrogance and presumption. And hear ye this, John i. 12. — “To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” How could they have been the sons of God before, for “to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born *not of blood*,” — then they were not make the sons of God by mere creation — “nor of the will of the flesh,” that is to say, not by any efforts of their own “but of God.” If any text can be more conclusive than this against universal sonship, I must confess I know of none, and unless these words mean nothing at all, they do mean just this, that

believers are the sons of God and none besides. But listen to another word of the Lord in the first epistle of John, 3 — “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth no righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” Here are two sorts of children, therefore all are not the children of God. Can it be supposed that those who are the children of the devil are nevertheless the children of God? I must confess my reason revolts against such a supposition, and though I think I might exercise a little imagination, yet I could not make my imagination sufficiently an acrobat to conceive of a man being at the same time a child of the devil, and yet a real child of God. Hear another, 2 Corinthians, vi. 17. — “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” Is not that “coming out” necessary to sonship, and were they his sons, were they his daughters, had they any claim or right to call him Father, until they came out from the midst of a wicked world, and were separate? If so, why doth God promise them what they have already. But again, Matthew v. 9. — “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” A fine title indeed if it belongs to every man! Where is the blessedness of the title, for they might be lovers of strife, and yet according to modern theologians they might still be the sons of God. Let us mark a yet more positive passage, Romans ix. 8. — “The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.” What then is to be said to this, “These are not the children of God.” If any man will contradict that flatly — well, be it so. I have no argument with which to convince the man who denies so strong and clear a witness. Listen to the divine apostle John, where in one of his epistles he is carried away in rhapsody of devout admiration, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” And then he goes on giving a description of those who are the sons of God, who could not mean any but those who by a living faith in Christ Jesus, have cast their souls once for all on him. As far as I can guess, the main text on which these people build the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, is that quotation which the apostle Paul took from a heathen poet — “As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” The apostle endorses that sentiment by quoting it, and against that endorsement we can of course have no contention; but

the word there used for “offspring,” expresses no idea of Fatherhood in the majestic sense of the term, it is a word which might be used as appropriately for the young of animals, the young of any other creature, it has not about it the human sympathies which belong to a father and a son. I know, besides this, nothing which could support this new theory. Possibly they fancy that creation is a paternal act, that all created things are sons. This is too absurd to need an answer, for if so, horses and cows, rats and mice, snakes and flies are children of God, for they are surely creatures as well as we. Taking away this corner-stone, this fancy theory tumbles to the ground, and that theory which seemed to be as tall as Babel, and threatened to make as much confusion, may right soon be demolished, if you will batter it with the Word of God. The fact is, brethren, that the relationship of a son of God belongs only to those who are “predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of the Father’s will:” Ephesians i. 5. The more you search the Bible, the more sure will you be that sonship is the special privilege of the chosen people of God and of none beside.

Having thus, as far as I can, established my point, that the privilege of our text is a special one, let me dwell upon it for a moment and remark that, as a special one, it is an act of pure unmistakeable grace. No man has any *right* to be a son of God. If we are born into his family it is a miracle of mercy. It is one of the ever-blessed exhibitions of the infinite love of God which without any cause in us, has set itself upon us. If thou art this day an heir of heaven, remember, man, thou wast once the slave of hell. Once thou didst wallow in the mire, and if thou shouldst adopt a swine to be thy child, thou couldst not then have performed an act of greater compassion than when God adopted thee. And if an angel could exalt a gnat to equal dignity with himself, yet would not the boon be such-an-one as that which God hath conferred on thee. He hath taken thee from the dunghill, and he hath set thee among princes. Thou hast lain among the pots, but he hath made thee as a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Remember that this is grace, and parentage, — look back to the hole of the pit whence thou art digged, and the miry clay whence thou wast drawn. Boast not, if thou art in the true olive. Thou art not there, because of thine original, thou art a scion from an evil tree, and the Divine Spirit hath changed thy nature, for thou wast once nothing but a

branch of the vine of Gomorrah. Ever let humility bow thee to the very earth while thine adoption lifts thee up to the third heaven.

Consider again, I pray you, what a dignity God hath conferred upon you — even upon *you* in making you his son. The tall archangel before the throne is not called God's Son, he is one of the most favoured of his servants, but not his child. I tell thee, thou poor brother in Christ, there is a dignity about thee that even angels may well envy. Thou in thy poverty art as a sparkling jewel in the darkness of the mine. Thou in the midst of thy sickness and infirmity art girt about with robes of glory, which make the spirits in heaven look down upon the earth with awe. Thou movest about this world as a prince among the crowd. The blood of heaven runs in thy veins; thou art one of the blood royal of eternity — a son of God, descendant of the King of kings. Speak of pedigrees, the glories of heraldry — thou hast more than heraldry could ever give thee, or all the pomp of ancestry could ever bestow.

II. And now I press forward to notice that in order that we may know whether we are partakers of this high — this royal relationship of children of God, the text furnishes us with a SPECIAL PROOF — “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. You will notice here, my beloved, that there are two witnesses in court — two who are ready to prove our filiation to the eternal God. The first witness is *our spirit*; the second witness is *The Spirit*, the eternal Spirit of God, who beareth witness with our spirit. It is as if a poor man were called into court to prove his right to some piece of land which was disputed. He standeth up and beareth his own faithful testimony; but some great one of the land — some nobleman who lives near — rises, stands in the witness box, and confirms his witness. So is it with our text. The plain, simple spirit of the humble-minded Christian cries, “I am God's child.” The glorious Spirit, one with God, attests the truth of the testimony, and beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Let us notice in the first place, how it is that *our spirit* is able to bear witness; and as this is a matter of experience, I can only appeal to those who are the true children of God; for no others are competent to give testimony. Our spirit bears witness that we are the children of God, when it feels a filial love to God. When bowing before his throne we can boldly say “Abba Father.”

— “Thou art my father,”

then our spirit concludes that we are sons, for thus it argues, “I feel to thee as a child feeleth to its parent, and it could not be that I should have the feeling of a son if I had not the rights of a son — if I were not a child thou wouldst never have given to me that filial affection which no dares to call thee “Father.”

Sometimes, too, the spirit feels that God is its Father not only by love but by trust. The rod has been upon our back and we have smarted very sore, but in the darkest hour we have been able to say, “The time is in my Father’s hands; I cannot murmur; I would not repine; I feel it is but right that I should suffer, otherwise my Father would never have made me suffer.” He surely doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of man for nought; and when in these dark gloomy times we have looked up to a Father’s face, and have said, “Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee; thy blows shall not drive thee from me; they shall but make me say, “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, and purge me from my sin.”” Then our spirit beareth witness that we are the children of God.

And are there not times with you, my dear friends, when your hearts feel that they would be emptied and void, unless God were in them. You have perhaps received an increase to your wealth, and after the first flush of pleasure which was but natural, you have said, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; this is not my joy.” You have had many mercies in your family, but you have felt that in them all there was a lack of something which could satisfy your heart, and you have felt that that something was God. My God, thou art my all in all — the circle where my passions move, the centre of my soul. Now these longings — these pantings for something more than this world can give you — were but the evidences of a child-like spirit, which was panting after its Father’s presence. You feel you must have your Father, or else the gifts of his providence are nothing to you. That is, *your* spirit beareth witness that you are the child of God. But there are times when the heir of heaven is as sure that he is God’s child as he is sure that he is his own father’s son. No doubt can make him question. The evil one may whisper, “*If* thou be the son of God.” But he says, “Get thee hence, Satan, I know I am the son of God.” A man might as well try to dispute him out of the fact of his existence as out of that equally sure fact that he has been born again, and that by gracious adoption he has been

taken into the family of God. This is our witnessing that we are born of God.

But the text, you see, furnishes us with a higher witness than this. God that cannot lie, in the person of the Holy Ghost, graciously condescendeth to say “Amen” to the testimony of our conscience. And whereas our experience sometimes leads our spirit to conclude that we are born of God, there are happy times when the eternal Spirit from off the throne, descends and fills our heart, and then we have the two witnesses bearing witness with each other, that we are children of God. Perhaps you ask me, how is this. I was reading a passage by Dr. Chalmers the other day, in which he says, that his own experience did not lead him to believe that the Holy Spirit ever gave any witness of our being the children of God, apart from the written Word of God, and his ordinary workings in our hearts. Now, I am not sure that the doctor is perfectly right. As far as his own experience went I dare say he was right, but there may be some far inferior to the doctor in genius, who nevertheless were superior in nearness of fellowship with God, and who could therefore go a little farther than the eloquent divine. Now, I do believe with him this morning, that the chief witness of God the Holy Spirit lies in this — the Holy Spirit has written this book which contains an account of what a Christian should be, and of the feelings which believers in Christ must have. I have certain experiences and feelings; turning to the Word, I find similar experiences and feelings recorded; and so I prove that I am right, and the Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am born of God. Suppose you have been enabled to believe in Jesus Christ for your salvation; that faith has produced love to Christ; that love to Christ has led you to work for Christ; you come to the Bible, and you find that this was just the very thing which was felt by early believers; and then you say, “Good Lord, I am thy son, because what I feel is what thou has said by the lips of thy servant must be felt by those who are thy children.” So the Spirit confirms the witness of my spirit that I am born of God.

But again, everything that is good in a Christian you know to be the work of God the Holy Ghost. When at any time then the Holy Spirit comforts you — sheds a sweet calm over your disturbed spirit; when at any period he instructs you, opens to you a mystery you did not understand before; when at some special period he inspires you with an unwonted affection,

an unusual faith in Christ; when you experience a hatred of sin, a faith in Jesus, a death to the world, and a life to God, these are the works of the Spirit. Now the Spirit never did work effectually in any but the children of God; and inasmuch as the Spirit works in you, he doth by that very working give his own infallible testimony to the fact that you are a child of God. If you had not been a child he would have left you where you were in your natural state; but inasmuch as he hath wrought in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure, he that put his stamp on you as being one of the family of the Most High. But I think must go a little further than this. I do believe that there is a supernatural way in which apart from means, the Spirit of God communicates with the spirit of man. My own little experience leads me to believe that apart from the Word of God, there are immediate dealings with the conscience and soul of man by the Holy Spirit, without any instrumentality, without even the agency of the truth. I believe that the Spirit of God sometimes comes into a mysterious and marvellous contact with the spirit of man, and that at times the Spirit speaketh in the heart of man by a voice not audible to the ear, but perfectly audible to the spirit which is the subject of it. he assures and consoles directly, by coming into immediate contact with the heart. It becomes our business then to take the Spirit's witness through his Word, and through his works, but I would seek to have immediate, actual, undivided fellowship with the Holy Ghost, who by his divine Spirit, should work in my spirit and convince me that I am a child of God.

Now let me ask my congregation, do any of you know that you are God's children? Say not, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God." There are not many in England, I think, who believe those words. There may be a few who do, but it has never been my misfortune to meet with them. Every one knows that it is a disgrace to a matchless prayer-book, that such words should be permitted to stand there—words so infamously untrue that by their gross untruthfulness they cease to have the destructive effect which more cunning language might have produced, because the conscience of man revolts against the idea that the sprinkling of drops of water upon the infants's brow can ever make it a member of Christ, and a child of God. But I ask you, does your spirit say to-day "I am God's child." Do you feel the longings, the loves, the confidences of a child? If not, tremble, for there are but two vast families in this world. They are the family of God, and the family of Satan — their

character how different — their end, how strangely divided! But let me say again to thee, hast thou ever felt that the Holy Ghost has borne witness with thy spirit in his word, and in his work, in thee; and in that secret whisper has he ever said to thee, “Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.” I conjure thee, give no sleep to thine eyes, no slumber to thine eyelids, till by this divine mysterious agency, thou art new made, new born, and new begotten, and so admitted not only nominally but really into the living family of the living God.

III. I shall now pass on to my third point. If it be settled in our mind by the true witness — the spirit within us, and the Spirit of God, — that we are God’s children, what a NOBLE PRIVILEGE now appears to our view. “HEIRS OF GOD, and joint heirs with Christ.” It does not always follow in human reasoning “if children, then heirs,” because in our families but one is the heir. There is but one that can claim the heir’s rights, and the heir’s title. It is not so in the family of God. Man as a necessary piece of political policy, may give to the heir that which surely he can have not more real right to in the sight of God, than the rest of the family — may give him all the inheritance, while his brethren, equally true born, may go without; but it is not so in the family of God. All God’s children are heirs, however numerous the family, and he that shall be born of God last, shall be as much his heir as he who was born first. Abel, the protomartyr, entering alone into heaven, shall not have a more secure title to the inheritance than he who, last of woman born, shall trust in Christ, and then ascend into his glory. In heaven’s logic it is true, “if children, then heirs.”

And see what it is that we are heirs of. The apostle opens with the grandest part of the inheritance first — *heirs of God* — heirs not of God’s gifts, and God’s works, but heirs of God himself. It was said of king Cyrus, that he was a prince of so amiable a disposition, that when at any time he sat down at meat, if there were aught that pleased his appetite, he would order it to be taken away and given to his friends with this message, “King Cyrus found that this food pleased his palate, and he thought his friend should feed upon that which he enjoyed himself.” This was thought to be a singular instance of his affability, and his kindness to his courtiers. But our God doeth more than this, he doth not send merely bread from his table, as in the day when man did eat angel’s food; he doth not give us merely to drink the wines on the lees well refined — the rich wines of

heaven — but he gives himself *himself* to us. And the believer is to be the heir, I say, not merely of God's works, not simply of God's gifts, but of God himself. Talk we of his omnipotence? — his Allmightiness is ours. Speak we of his omniscience? — all his wisdom is engaged in our behalf. Do we say that he is love? — that love belongs to us. Can we glory that he is full of immutability, and changes not? — that eternal unchangeableness is engaged for the defence of the people of God. All the attributes of divinity are the property of God's children — their inheritance entailed upon them. Nay, he himself is ours. Oh what riches! If we could say this morning, that all the stars belong to us; if we could turn the telescope to the most remote of the fixed stars, and then could say with the pride of possession, so natural to man, "That star, a thousand times bigger than the sun, is mine. I am the king of that inheritance, and without me doth not a dog move his tongue." If we could then sweep the telescope along the milky way, and see the millions upon millions of stars that lie clustered together there, and could cry, "All these are mine," yet these possessions were but a speck compared with that which is in the text. Heir of God! He to whom all these things are but as nothing, gives himself up to the inheritance of his people.

Note yet a little further concerning the special privilege of heirship, — we are *joint heirs with Christ*. That is, whatever Christ possesses, as heir of all things, belongs to us. Splendid must be the inheritance of Jesus Christ. Is he not very God of very God, Jehovah's only begotten Son, Most High and glorious, though he bowed himself to the grave and became the Servant of servants, yet God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

Oh! what angelic tongue shall hymn his glory? What fiery lips shall ever speak of his possessions, of his riches, — the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus. But, beloved, all that belongs to Christ belongs to Christ's people. It is as when a man doth marry. His possessions shall be shared by his spouse; and when Christ took his Church unto himself he endowed her with all his goods, both temporal and eternal. He gives to us his raiments, and thus we stand arrayed. His righteousness becomes our beauty. He gave to us his person, it has become our meat and our drink; we eat his flesh and drink his blood. He gave to us his inmost heart; he loved us even to the death. He gave to us his crown; he gave to us his throne; for "to him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne, even as I have

overcome, and have sat down with my Father upon his throne.” He gave to us his heaven, for “where I am, there shall my people be.” He gave to us the fulness of his joy, for “my joy shall be in you, that your joy may be full.” I repeat it, there is nothing in the highest heaven which Christ has reserved unto himself, “for all things are yours, and ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”

I cannot stay longer on that point, except just to notice, that we must never quarrel with this divine arrangement. “Oh,” say you, “we never shall.” Stay, stay, brother; I have known you do so already, for when all that is Christ’s belongs to you, do ye forget that Christ once had a cross, and that belongs to you? Christ once wore a thorny crown, and if you are to have all that he has, you must bear the thorny crown too? Have you forgotten that he had shame and spitting, the reproach, the rebuke of men, and that he conceived all those to be greater riches than all the treasures of this world? Come, I know as you look down the inventory, you are apt to look a little askance on that cross, and you think, “Well, the crown is glorious, but I love not the spittle, I care not to be despised and rejected of men.” Oh! you are quarreling with this divine arrangement, you are beginning to differ with this blessed policy of God. Why, one would have thought you would rejoice to take your Master for better or for worse, and to be partaker with him, not only in his glories but in his sufferings. So it must be, “If so be that we suffer with him that we also may be glorified together.” Is there a place into which your Master went that you would be ashamed to enter? If so, methinks your heart is not in a right state. Would you refuse to go with him to the garden of his agony? Believer, would you be ashamed to stand and be accused as he was, and have false witness born against you? And would you blush to sit side- by-side with him, and be made nothing of as he was? Oh, when you start aside at a little jest, let your conscience prick you, and say, “Am I not a joint heir with Christ, and am I about to quarrel with the legacy? Did he not say, “In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world?” And oh, would you be ashamed to die for Christ; methinks, if you are what you should be, you will glory in tribulations also, and count it sweet to suffer for Christ. I know the world turns this into ridicule and says, “That the hypocrite loves persecution;” no, not the hypocrite, but the true believer; he feels that though the suffering must ever be painful, yet for Christ’s sake, it becomes so glorious that the pain is all forgotten.

Come, believer, will you be partaker with Christ to-day in the battle, and then divide this spoil with him? Come, will you wade with him through the deep waters, and then at last climb up the topless hills with him? Are you prepared now to be despised and rejected of men that you may at last ascend up on high, leading captivity captive? The inheritance cannot be divided; if you will have the glory, you must have the shame. He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Come, men, put your face against all weathers; be ready to come up hill, with the snow blowing in your face, be ready to march on when the tempest howls, and the lightnings flash over head, and the snow becomes knee-deep; nay, be ready to go into the crevasse with him, and perish, if need be. Who quarrels with this sacred regulation? Certainly no true child of God; he would not have it altered, even if he might.

IV. And now I come to my last point, upon which briefly but I hope interestingly. The SPECIAL CONDUCT naturally expected from those who are partakers of the peculiar privileges of being the children of God. In the golden age of Rome, if a man were tempted to dishonesty, he would stand upright, look the tempter in the face, and say to him, "I am a Roman." He thought that a sufficient reason why he should neither lie nor cheat. It ought to be ten times more than sufficient answer to every temptation, for a man to be able to say, "I am a son of God; shall such a man as I yield to sin?" I have been astonished in looking through old Roman history at the wonderful prodigies of integrity and valour which were produced by idolatry, or rather, which were produced by patriotism, and that principle which ruled the Romans, namely, love of fame. And I say it this morning, it is a shameful thing that ever idolatry should be able to breed better men than some who profess Christianity. And I think I may stand firmly while I argue here, that if a Roman, a worshipper of Jupiter or Saturn, became great or glorious, a Son of God ought to be nobler far. Look ye, sirs, at Brutus; he has established a republic, he has put down tyranny, he sits upon the judgment seat; his two sons are brought before him, they have been traitors to the commonwealth. What will the father do? He is a man of a loving heart and loves his sons, but there they stand. Will he execute justice as a judge, or will he prefer his family to his country? He covers his face for a moment with his hands, and then looking down at his sons, and finding that the testimony is complete against them, he says, "Lictors, do your work." They bare their backs, the rod scourgeth them.

“Complete the sentence, lictors;” and their heads are smitten off in the father’s presence. Stern justice swayed his spirit, and no other feeling could for a single moment make him turn aside. Christian men, do you feel this with regard to your sins. When you have been sitting on the judgment bench; there has been some favourite sin brought up, and you have, oh, let me blush to say it, you have wished to spare it, it was so near your heart, you have wished to let it live, whereas should you not as the son of God have said, “If my eye offend me, I will pluck it out and cast it from me, if my right hand offend me, I will cut it off, rather than I should in anything offend my God.” Brutus slays his sons; but some Christians would spare their sins. Look again at that noble youth, Mutius Scaevola. He goes into the tent of King Pyrrhus with the intention to put him to death, because he is the enemy of his country; he slays the wrong man; Pyrrhus orders him to be taken captive. A pan of hot coals is blazing in the tent; Scaevola puts out his right hand and holds it; it crackles in the flame; the young man flinches not, though his fingers drop away. “There are 400 youths,” says he, “in Rome as brave as I am, and that will bear fire as well; and tyrant,” he says “you will surely die.”” Yet here are Christian men, who, if they are a little sneered at, or snubbed, or get the cold shoulder for Christ’s sake, are half ashamed of their profession, and would go and hide it. And if they are not like Peter — tempted to curse and swear to escape the blessed imputation — they would turn the conversation, that they might not suffer for Christ. Oh for 400 Scaevolas, 400 men who for Christ’s sake would burn, not their right hands, but their bodies, if indeed Christ’s name might be glorified, and sin might be stabbed to the heart. Or, read you that old legend of Curtius, the Roman knight. A great gulf had opened in the Forum, perhaps caused by an earthquake, and the auspices had said that the chasm could never be filled up, except the most precious thing in Rome could be cast into it. Curtius puts on his helmet, and his armour, mounts his horse and leaps into the cleft, which is said to have filled at once, because courage, valour, and patriotism, were the best things in Rome. I wonder how many Christians there are who would leap like that into the cleft. Why, I see you, sirs, if there is a new and perilous work to be done for Christ, you like to be in the rear rank this time; if there were something honourable, so that you might ride on with your well caparisoned steeds in the midst of the dainty ranks ye would do it; but to leap into certain annihilation for Christ’s sake — Oh! heroism, where is it fled — whither

has it gone. Thou Church of God, surely it must survive in thee; for to whom should it more belong to die and sacrifice all, than to those who are the sons of God. Look ye again at Camillus. Camillus had been banished from Rome by false accusations. He was ill-treated, abused, and slandered, and went away to retirement. Suddenly the Goths, the old enemies of Rome, fell upon the city. They surrounded it; they were about to sack it, and Camillus was the only man who could deliver it. Some would have said within themselves "Let the caitiff nation be cut off. The city has turned me out; let it rue the day that it ever drove me away." But no, Camillus gathers together his body of followers, falls upon the Goths, routs them and enters in triumph into Rome though he was an exile. Oh Christian, this should ever be your spirit, only in a higher degree. When the Church rejects you, casts you out, annoys, despises you, still be ready to defend her, and when you have an ill name even in the lips of God's people, still stand up for the common cause of Zion, the city of our solemnities. Or look you at Cincinnatus. He is chosen Dictator, but as soon as ever his dictatorship is over he retires to his little farm of three acres, and goes to his plough, and when he is wanted to be absolute monarch of Rome he is found at his plough upon his three acres of land and his little cottage. He served his country, not for himself, but for his country's sake; and can it be that you will not be poor yet honest for Christ's sake! Will you descend to the tricks of trade to win money. Ah, then, the Roman eclipses the Christian. Will you not be satisfied to serve God though you lose by it; to stand up and be thought an arrant fool, because you will not learn the wisdom of this world; to be esteemed a mad fanatic, because you cannot swim with the current. Can you not do it? Can you not do it? Then again I say to you, "Tell it not in Gath and publish it not in Askelon, then has a heathen eclipsed a Christian." May the sons of God be greater than the sons of Romulus. One other instance let me give you. You have heard of Regulus the Roman general; he was taken prisoner by Carthaginians, who anxiously wished for peace. They told him to go home to Rome, and see if he could not make peace. But his reply was, "No, I trust they will always be at war with you, for Carthage must be destroyed if Rome is to prosper." They compelled him, however, to go, exacting from him this promise, that if the Romans did not make peace he would come back, and if he came back they would put him to death in the most horrid manner that ever cruelty could invent. Regulus returns to Rome; he stands up in

the senate and conjures them never to make peace in Carthage, but of his wife and children, and tells them that he is going back to Carthage, and of course the tell him that he need not keep faith with an enemy. I imagine that he said, "I promised to go back, and though it is to pangs indescribable, I will return." His wife clings to his shoulder, his children seek to persuade him; they attend him to the waters' edge; he sails for Carthage; his death was too horrible to be described. Never martyr suffered more for Christ than that man suffered for his word's sake. And shall a Christian man break his promise? shall a son of God be less true than a Roman or a heathen? Shall it be, I say, that integrity shall be found in heathen lands and not be found here? No. May you be holy, harmless, sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. I used this argument; I thought it might be a new one; I am sure it is a forcible one. You cannot imagine, surely, that God is to allow heathens to eclipse his children. Oh! never let it be so. So live, so act, ye sons of God, that the world may say of you, "Yes, these men bring forth the fruits of God; they are like their Father; they honour his name; they are indeed filled with his grace, for their every word is as true as his oath; their every act is sincere and upright; their heart is kind, their spirit is gentle; they are firm but yet they are generous; they are strict in their integrity, but they are loving in their souls; they are men who, like God, are full of love; but like him are severely just. They are sternly holy; they are, like him, ready to forgive, but they can by no means tolerate iniquity, nor hear that sin should live in their presence." God bless you, ye sons of God, and may those of you who are strangers to him, be convinced and converted by this sermon, and seek that grace by which alone you can have your prayer fulfilled: —

"With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity."

THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF ALL THEOLOGY

Unpublished Notes of a Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, April 17th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

Delivered at Bethesda Chapel, Swansea

On June 25th, 1861.

Note: On Tuesday, June 25th, 1861, the beloved C. H. Spurgeon visited Swansea. The day was wet, so the services could not be held in the open-air; and, as no building in the town was large enough to hold the vast concourses of people who had come from all parts to hear the renowned preacher, he consented to deliver two discourses in the morning; first at Bethesda, and then at Trinity Chapel. At each place he preached for an hour and a quarter. The weather cleared up during the day; so, in the evening, Mr. Spurgeon addressed an immense gathering of people in the open-air.

— T.W.M.

FORWARDED BY PASTOR T. W. MEDHURST, CARDIFF.

“All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

— John 6:37

What a difference there is between the words of Christ, and those of all mere man! Most men speak many words, yet say but little; Christ speaks few words, yet says very much. In modern books, you may read scores of pages, and scarcely come across a new thought; but when Christ speaks, every syllable seems to tell. He hits the nail on the head each time He lifts the hammer of His Word. The Words of Christ are like ingots of solid gold; we preachers too often beat out the gold

so thin, that whole acres of it would scarcely be worth a farthing. The Words of Christ are always to be distinguished from those of His creatures, not only for their absolute truthfulness, but also for their profound fulness of matter. In all His language He is “full of grace and truth.” Look at the text before us. Here we have, in two small sentences, the sum and substance of all theology. The great questions which have divided the Church in all ages, the apparently contradictory doctrines which have set one minister of Christ against his fellow, are here revealed so simply and plainly, “that he may run that readeth” (Habakkuk 2:2). Even a child may understand the Words of Christ, though perhaps the loftiest human intellect cannot fathom the mystery hidden therein.

Take the first sentence of my text: “*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.*” What a weighty sentence! Here we have taught us what is called, in the present day, “High Calvinistic doctrine” — the purpose of God; the certainty that God’s purpose will stand; the invincibility of God’s will; and the absolute assurance that Christ “shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”

Look at the second sentence of my text: “*And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” Here we have the richness, the fulness, the unlimited extent of the power of Christ to save those who put their trust in Him. Here is a text upon which one might preach a thousand sermons. We might take these two sentences as a life-long text, and never exhaust the theme.

Mark, too, how our Lord Jesus Christ gives us the whole truth. We have many ministers who can preach well upon the first sentence: “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.” Just set them going upon Election, or everlasting covenant engagements, and they will be earnest and eloquent, for they are fond of dwelling upon these points, and a well-instructed child of God can hear them with delight and profit. Such preachers are often the fathers of the Church, and the very pillars thereof; but, unfortunately, many of these excellent brethren cannot preach so well upon the second sentence of my text: “And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” When they get to that truth, they are half afraid of it; they hesitate to preach what they consider to be a too open salvation. They cannot give the gospel invitation as freely as they find it in the Word of God. They do not deny it, yet they stutter and stammer sadly, when they get upon this theme.

Then, on the other hand, we have a large number of good ministers who can preach on this second clause of the text, but they cannot preach on the first clause. How fluent is their language as they tell out the freeness of salvation! Here they are much at home in their preaching; but, we are sorry to be compelled to say that, very often, they are not much at home when they come to doctrinal matters, and they would find it rather a difficult matter to preach fluently on the first sentence of my text. They would, if they attempted to preach from it, endeavour to cut out of it all that savours of Divine Sovereignty. They do not preach the whole “truth” which “is in Jesus.”

Why is it that some of us do not see both sides of God’s revealed truth? We persist in closing one eye; we will not see all that may be seen if we open both our eyes; and, sometimes, we get angry with a brother because he can see a little more than we do. I think our text is very much like a stereoscopic picture, for it presents two views of the truth. Both views are correct, for they are both photographed by the same light. How can we bring these two truths together? We get the stereoscope of the scripture, and looking with both eyes, the two pictures melt into one. God has given us, in His Word, the two pictures of divine truth; but we have not all got the stereoscope properly adjusted to make them melt into one. When we get to heaven, we shall see how all God’s truth harmonizes. If we cannot make these two parts of truth harmonize now, at any rate we must not dare to blot out one of them, for God has given them both.

Now, as God shall help me this morning, I want to expand both sentences of my text with equal fidelity and plainness. I shall not expect to please some of you while speaking on the first sentence, and I shall not be surprised if I fail to please others of you when I come to the second sentence; but, in either case, it will be a small matter to me if I have an easy conscience because I have proclaimed what I believe to be the whole truth of God. I am sure you will be willing to give a patient hearing to that which you may not fully receive, if you believe it to be declared in all honesty. Reject what I say, if it be not true, but if it be the Word of God, receive it; and, be it known unto you that it is at your peril if you dare to reject the truthful Word of the glad tidings of God.

I. I will begin with the first sentence of the text: “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.” We have here, first, THE FIRM FOUNDATION UPON WHICH OUR SALVATION RESTS.

It rests, you perceive, not on something which man does, but on something which God the Father does. The Father gives certain persons to His Son, and the Son says, “All that the Father giveth Me Shall come to Me.” I take it that the meaning of the text is this, — that, if any do come to Jesus Christ, it is those whom the Father gave to Christ. And the reason why they come, — if we search to the very bottom of things, — is, that the Father puts it into their hearts to come. The reason why one man is saved, and another man is lost, is to be found in God; not in anything which the saved man did, or did not do; not in anything which he felt, or did not feel; but in something altogether irrespective of himself, even in the sovereign grace of God. In the day of God’s power, the saved are made willing to give their souls to Jesus. The language of Scripture must explain this point. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13). “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Romans 9:16). If you want to see the fount of grace, you must go to the everlasting God; even as, if you want to know why that river runs in this direction, and not in that, you must trace it up to its source. In the case of every soul that is now in heaven, it was the will of God that drew it thither. In the case of every spirit that is on its way to glory now, unto God and unto Him alone must be the honour of its salvation; for He it is who makes one “differ from another” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

I do not care to argue upon this point, except I put it thus: If any say, “It is man himself who makes the difference,” I reply, “You are involving yourself in a great dilemma; if man himself makes the difference, then mark — man himself must have the glory.” Now, I am certain you do not mean to give man the glory of his own salvation; you would not have men throw up their caps in heaven, and shout, “Unto *ourselves* be the glory, for we, ourselves, were the hinge and turning point of our own salvation.” No, you would have all the saved cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus, and give to Him alone all the honour and all the glory. This, however, cannot be,

unless, in that critical point, that diamond hinge upon which man's salvation shall turn, God shall have the control, and not the will of man. You know that those who do not believe this truth as a matter of *doctrine*, do believe it in their hearts as a matter of *experience*.

I was preaching, not very long ago, at a place in Derbyshire, to a congregation, nearly all of whom were Methodists, and as I preached, they were crying out, "Hallelujah! Glory! Bless the Lord!." They were full of excitement, until I went on to say in my sermon, "This brings me to the doctrine of *Election*." There was no crying out of "Glory!" and "Hallelujah!" then. Instead, there was a great deal of shaking of the head, and a sort of telegraphing round the place, as though something dreadful was coming. Now, I thought, I must have their attention again, so I said, "You all believe in the doctrine of Election?" "No, we don't, lad," said one. "Yes, you do, and I am going to preach it to you, and make you cry 'Hallelujah!' over it." I am certain they mistrusted my power to do that; so, turning a moment from the subject, I said, "Is there any difference between you and the ungodly world?" "Ay! Ay! Ay!" "Is there any difference between you and the drunkard, the harlot, the blasphemer?" "Ay! Ay! Ay!" Ay! there was a difference indeed. "Well, now," I said, "there is a great difference; who made it, then?" for, whoever made the difference, should have the glory of it. "Did you make the difference?" "No, lad," said one; and the rest all seemed to join in the chorus. "Who made the difference, then? Why, the Lord did it; and did you think it wrong for Him to make a difference between you and other men?" "No, no," they quickly said. "Very well, then; if it was not wrong for God to make the difference, it was not wrong for Him to purpose to make it, and that is the doctrine of Election." Then they cried, "Hallelujah!" as I said they would.

The doctrine of Election is God's purposing in His heart that He would make some men better than other men; that He would give to some men more grace than to other men; that some should come out and receive the mercy; that others, left to their own free will, should reject it; that some should gladly accept the invitations of mercy, while others, of their own accord, stubbornly refuse the mercy to which the whole world of mankind is invited. All men, by nature, refuse the invitations of the gospel. God, in the sovereignty of His grace, makes a difference by secretly inclining the

hearts of some men, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to partake of His everlasting mercy in Christ Jesus. I am certain that, whether we are Calvinists or Arminians, if our hearts are right with God, we shall all adoringly testify: "We love Him, because He first loved us." If that be not Election, I know not what it is.

II. Now, in the second place, note THE CERTAINTY OF THE ETERNAL SALVATION OF ALL WHO WERE GIVEN TO JESUS; "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me."

This is eternally settled, and so settled that it cannot be altered by either man or devil. All whose names are written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, all whom God the Father designed to save when He gave up His well-beloved Son to die upon the cross of Calvary, shall in time be drawn by the Holy Spirit, and shall surely come to Christ, and be kept by the Spirit, through the precious blood of Christ, and be folded for ever with His sheep, on the hill-tops of glory.

Mark! "*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.*" Not one of those whom the Father hath given to Jesus shall perish. If any were lost, the text would have to read: "Almost all," or, "All but one;" but it positively says "*All,*" without any exception; even though one may have been, in his unregenerate state, the very chief of sinners. Yet even that chosen one, that given one, shall come to Jesus; and when he has come, he shall be held by that strong love that at first chose him, and he shall never be let go, but shall be held fast, even unto the end. *Miss Much-afraid*, and *Mrs. Despondency*, and *Mr. Feeble-mind*, shall as certainly come to the arms of Christ, as *Mr. Great-heart*, and *Mr. Faithful*, and *Mr. Valiant-for-Truth*. If one jewel were lost from Christ's crown, then Christ's crown would not be all-glorious. If one member of the body of Christ were to perish, Christ's body would not be complete. If one of those who are one with Christ should miss his way to eternal live, Christ would not be a perfect Christ.

"*All that the Father giveth Me Shall come to Me.*" "*But suppose they will not come?*" I cannot suppose any such thing, for He says they "*shall come.*" They shall be made willing in the day of God's power. God knows how to make a passage through the heart of man; and though man is a free agent, yet God can incline him, willingly, to come to Jesus. There are many

sentences even in Wesley's hymn-book which contain this truth. If God took away freedom from man, and then saved him, it would be but a small miracle. For God to leave man free to come to Jesus, and yet to so move him as to make him come, is a divinely-wrought miracle indeed. If we were for a moment to admit that man's will could be more than a match for God's will, do you not see where we should be landed? Who made man? God! Who made God? Shall we lift up man to the sovereign throne of Deity? Who shall be master, and have his way, God or man? The will of God, that says they "shall come", knows how to make them come.

"But suppose it should be one of those who are living in the interior of Africa, and he does not hear the gospel; what then?" He shall hear the gospel; either he shall come to the gospel, or the gospel shall go to him. Even if no minister should go to such a chosen one, he would have the gospel specially revealed to him rather than that the promise of the Almighty God should be broken.

"But suppose there should be one of God's chosen who has become so bad that there is no hope for him? He never attends a place of worship; never listens to the gospel; the voice of the preacher never reaches him; he has grown hardened in his sin, like steel that has been seven times annealed in the fire; what then?" That man shall be arrested by God's grace, and that obdurate, hard-hearted one shall be made to see the mercy of God; the tears shall stream down his cheeks, and he shall be made willing to receive Jesus as Saviour. I think that, as God could bend *my* will, and bring *me* to Christ, He can bring anybody.

"Why was *I* made to hear His voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather than come?"

"Twas the same love the spread the feast,
That sweetly forced *me* in;
Else *I* had still refused to taste,
And perish'd in *my* sin."

Yes, "*sweetly forced me in*;" — there is no other word that can so accurately describe my case. Oh, how long Jesus Christ stood at the door

of my heart, and knocked, and knocked, and knocked in vain! I asked: "Why should I leave the pleasures of this world?" Yet still He knocked, and there was music in every sound of His pleading voice; but I said, "Nay, let Him go elsewhere." And though, through the window, I could see His thorn-crowned head, and the tears standing in His eyes, and the prints of the nails in His hands, as He stood and knocked, and said, "Open to Me," yet I heeded Him not. Then He sent my mother to me, and she pleaded, "let the Saviour in, Charlie;" and I replied, in action, though not in words, "Nay, I love thee, my mother; but I do not love Christ, thy Saviour." Then came the black hours of sickness; but in effect I said, "Nay, I fear not sickness, nor death itself; I will still defy my Maker." But it happened, one day, that He graciously put in His hand by the hole of the door, and I moved toward Him, and then I opened the door, and cried, "Come in! Come in!" Alas! alas! He was gone; and for five long years I stood, with tears in mine eyes, and I sought Him weeping, but I found Him not. I cried after Him, but He answered me not. I said, "Whither is He gone? Oh, that I had never rejected Him? Oh, that He would but come again!" Surely the angels must then have said, "A great change has come over that youth; he would not let Christ in when He knocked, but now he wants Christ to come." And when He did come, do you think my soul rejected Him? Nay, nay; but I fell down at His feet, crying, "Come in! Come in! thou Blessed Saviour. I have waited for Thy salvation, O my God!"

There is no living soul beyond the reach of hope, no chosen one whom Christ cannot bring up even from the very gates of hell. He can bare His arm, put out His hand, and pluck the brand "out of the fire" (Zechariah 3:3). In a horrible pit, in the miry clay, His jewels have been hidden; but down from the throne of light He can come, and thrusting in His arm of mercy, He can pull them out, and cause them to glitter in His crown for ever. Let it be settled in our hearts, as a matter of fact, that what God has purposed to do, He will surely accomplish.

I need not dwell longer upon this point, because I think I have really brought out the essence of this first sentence of my text: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Permit me just to remark, before I pass on, that I am sometimes sad on account of the alarm that some Christians seem to have concerning this precious and glorious doctrine. We

have, in the Baptist denomination, — I am sorry to have to say it, — many ministers, excellent brethren, who, while they believe this doctrine, yet never preach it. On the other hand, we have some ministers, excellent brethren, who never preach anything else. They have a kind of barrel-organ that only plays five tunes, and they are always repeating them. It is either Election, Predestination, Particular Redemption, Effectual Calling, Final Perseverance, or something of that kind; it is always the same note. But we have also a great many others who never preach concerning these doctrines, though they admit they are doctrines taught in Sacred Scripture. The reason for their silence is, because they say these truths are not suitable to be preached from the pulpit. I hold such an utterance as that to be very wicked. Is the doctrine *here* — in this Bible? If it is, as God hath taught it, so are we to teach it. “But,” they say, “not in a mixed assembly.” Where can you find an unmixed assembly? God has sent the Bible into a mixed world, and the gospel is to be preached in “all the world”, and “to every creature.” “Yes,” they say, “preach the gospel, but not these special truths of the gospel; because, if you preach these doctrines, the people will become Antinomians and Hyper-Calvinists.” Not so; the reason why people become Hyper-Calvinists and Antinomians, is because some, who profess to be Calvinists, often keep back part of the truth, and do not, as Paul did, “declare all the counsel of God”; they select certain parts of Scripture, where their own particular views are taught, and pass by other aspects of God’s truth. Such preachers as John Newton, and in later times, your own Christmas Evans, were men who preached the whole truth of God; they kept back nothing that God has revealed; and, as the result of their preaching, Antinomianism could not find a foot-hold anywhere. We should have each doctrine of Scripture in its proper place, and preach it fully; and if we want to have a genuine revival of religion, we must preach these doctrines of Jehovah’s sovereign grace again and again. Do not tell me they will not bring revivals. There was but one revival that I have ever heard of, apart from Calvinistic doctrine, and that was the one in which Wesley took so great a part; but then George Whitefield was there also to preach the whole Word of God. When people are getting sleepy, if you want to arouse and wake them up thoroughly, preach the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty to them; for that will do it right speedily.

III. I shall now turn very briefly to the second sentence of my text: “And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

“Now,” says somebody, “he is going to knock down all that he has been building up.” Well, I would rather be inconsistent with myself than with my Master; but I dare not alter this second sentence, and I have no desire to alter it. Let it stand as it is, all its glorious simplicity: —

“HIM THAT COMETH TO ME I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT.”

Let the whole world come, still this promise is big enough to embrace them all in its arms. There is no mistake here, the wrong man cannot come. If any sinner come to Christ, he is sure to be the right one. Mark, too, as there is no limitation in *the person coming*, so there is no limitation in *the manner of the coming*. Says one, “Suppose I come the wrong way?” You cannot come the wrong way; it is written, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.” “No man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father” (John 6:44, 65). If, then, you come to Christ in any way, you are drawn of the Father, and He cannot draw the wrong way. If you come to Christ at all, the power and will to come have been given you of the Father. If you come to Christ, He will in no wise cast you out; for no possible or conceivable reason will Jesus ever cast out any sinner who comes to Him. There is no reason in hell, or on earth, or in heaven, why Jesus should cast out the soul that comes to Him. If Satan, the foul accuser of the brethren, brings reasons why the coming sinner should not be received, Jesus will “cast down” the accuser, but He will not “cast out” the sinner. “Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give your rest,” is still His invitation and His promise, too.

Let us suppose a case by the way of illustration. Here is a man in Swansea, — ragged, dirty, coal-begrimed, — who has received a message from Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria. It reads in this wise: “You are hereby commanded to come, just as you are, to our palace at Windsor, to receive great and special favours at our hand. You will stay away at your peril.” The man reads the message, and at first scarcely understands it; so he thinks, “I must wash and prepare myself.” Then, he re-reads the royal summons, and the words arrest him: “*Come just as you are.*” So he starts, and tells the people in the train where he is going, and they laugh at him. At length he arrives at Windsor Castle; there he is stopped by the guard, and questioned. He explains why he has come, and shows the Queen’s message; and he is allowed to pass. He next meets with

a gentlemen in waiting, who, after some explanations and expressions of astonishment, allows him to enter the ante-room. When there, our friend becomes frightened on account of his begrimed and ragged appearance; he is half inclined to rush from the place with fear, when he remembers the works of the royal command: "*Stay away at your peril.*" Presently, the Queen herself appears, and tells him how glad she is that he has come just as he was. She says she purposes that he shall be suitably clothed, and be made one of the princes of her court. She adds, "*I told you to come as you were.* It seemed to be a strange command to you, but I am glad you have obeyed, and so come."

I do think this is what Jesus Christ says to every creature under heaven. The gospel invitation runs thus: "Come, come, come to Christ, *just as you are.*" "But, let me feel more." *No, come just as you are.* "But let me get home to my own room, and let me pray." *No, no, come to Christ just as you are.* As you are, trust in Jesus, and He will save you. Oh, do dare to trust Him! If anybody shall ask, "Who are you?" answer, "I am nobody." If anyone objects, "You are such a filthy sinner," reply, "Yes, 'tis true, so I am; but He Himself told me to come." If anyone shall say, "You are not fit to come," say, "I know I am not fit; but He told me to come." Therefore,

"Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity join'd with power;
He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor fitness fondly dream;
All the *fitness* He requireth,
Is to feel you need of Him:
This He gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Sinner, trust in Jesus: and if thou dost perish trusting in Jesus, I will perish with thee. I will make my bed in hell, side by side with thee, sinner, if thou canst perish trusting in Christ, and thou shalt lie there, and taunt me to all

eternity for having taught thee falsely, if we perish. But that can never be; those who trust in Jesus shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Come to Jesus, and He will in no wise cast thee out.

May the Lord bless the words I have spoken! Though hastily suggested to my mind, and feebly delivered to you, the Lord bless them, for Christ's sake! Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 5th, 1864, by the

Revelation C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

— Mark 16:15-16.

In the preceding verse our Lord Jesus Christ gives us some little insight into the natural character of the apostles whom he selected to be the first ministers of the Word. They were evidently men of like passions with us, and needed to be rebuked even as we do. On the occasion when our Lord sent forth the eleven to preach the gospel to every creature, he “appeared unto them as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen;” from which we may surely gather that to preach the Word, the Lord was pleased to choose imperfect men; men, too, who of themselves were very weak in the grace of faith in which it was most important that they should excel. Faith is the conquering grace, and is of all things the main requisite in the preacher of the Word; and yet the honoured men who were chosen to be the leaders of the divine crusade needed a rebuke concerning their unbelief. Why was this? Why, my brethren, because the Lord has ordained evermore that we should have this treasure in *earthen* vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. If you should find a perfect minister, then might the praise and honour of his usefulness accrue to man; but God is frequently pleased to select for eminent usefulness men evidently honest and sincere,

but who have some manifest infirmity by which all the glory is cast off from them and laid upon Himself, and upon Himself alone. Let it never be supposed that we who are God's ministers either excuse our faults or pretend to perfection. We labour to walk in holiness, but we cannot claim to be all that we wish to be. We do not base the claims of God's truth upon the spotlessness of our characters, but upon the fact that it comes from him. You have believed in spite of our infirmities, and not because of our virtues; if, indeed, you had believed our word because of our supposed perfection, your faith would stand in the excellency of man and not in the power of God. We come unto you often with much trembling, sorrowing over our follies and weaknesses, but we deliver to you God's Word as God's Word, and we beseech you to receive it not as coming from us poor, sinful mortals, but as proceeding from the Eternal and Thrice Holy God; and if you so receive it, and by its own vital force are moved and stirred up towards God and his ways, then is the work of the Word sure work, which it could not and would not be if it rested in any way upon man.

Our Lord having thus given us an insight into the character of the persons whom he has chosen to proclaim his truth, then goes on to deliver to the chosen champions, their commission for the Holy War. I pray you mark the words with solemn care. He sums up in a few words the whole of their work, and at the same time foretells the result of it, telling them that some would doubtless believe and so be saved, and some on the other hand would not believe and would most certainly, therefore, be damned, that is, condemned for ever to the penalties of God's wrath. The lines containing the commission of our ascended Lord are certainly of the utmost importance, and demand devout attention and implicit obedience, not only from all who aspire to the work of the ministry, but also from all who hear the message of mercy. A clear understanding of these words is absolutely necessary to our success in our Master's work, for if we do not understand the commission it is not at all likely that we shall discharge it aright. To alter these words were more than impertinence, it would involve the crime of treason against the authority of Christ and the best interests of the souls of men. O for grace to be very jealous here.

Wherever the apostles went they met with obstacles to the preaching of the gospel, and the more open and effectual was the door of utterance the more numerous were the adversaries. These brave men who wielded the

sword of the Spirit as to put to flight all their foes; and this they did not by craft and guile, but by making a direct cut at the error which impeded them. Never did they dream for a moment of adapting the gospel to the unhallowed tastes or prejudices of the people, but at once directly and boldly they brought down with both their hands the mighty sword of the Spirit upon the crown of the opposing error. This morning, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, my Helper and Defense, I shall attempt to do the same; and if I should provoke some hostility — if I should through speaking what I believe to be the truth lose the friendship of some and stir up the enmity of more, I cannot help it. The burden of the Lord is upon me, and I must deliver my soul. I have been loath enough to undertake the work, but I am forced to it by an awful and overwhelming sense of solemn duty. As I am soon to appear before my Master's bar, I will this day, if ever in my life, bear my testimony for truth, and run all risks. I am content to be cast out as evil if it must be so, but I cannot, I dare not, hold my peace. The Lord knoweth I have nothing in my heart but the purest love to the souls of those whom I feel imperatively called to rebuke sternly in the Lord's name. Among my hearers and readers, a considerable number will censure if not condemn me, but I cannot help it. If I forfeit your love for truth's sake I am grieved for you, but I cannot, I dare not, do otherwise. It is as much as my soul is worth to hold my peace any longer, and whether you approve or not I must speak out. Did I ever court your approbation? It is sweet to everyone to be applauded; but if for the sake of the comforts of respectability and the smiles of men any Christian minister shall keep back a part of his testimony, his Master at the last shall require it at his hands. This day, standing in the immediate presence of God, I shall speak honestly what I feel, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me; and I shall leave the matter with you to judge concerning it, as you will answer for that judgment at the last great day.

I find that the great error which we have to contend with throughout England (and it is growing more and more), is one in direct opposition to my text, well known to you as the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. We will confront this dogma with the assertion, that BAPTISM WITHOUT FAITH SAVES NO ONE. The text says, "*He that believeth* and is baptized shall be saved;" but whether a man be baptized or no, it asserts that "*he that believeth not* shall be damned:" so that baptism does not save the unbeliever, nay, it does not in any degree exempt him from the

common doom of all the ungodly. He may have baptism, or he may not have baptism, but if he believeth not, he shall be in any case most surely damned. Let him be baptized by immersion or sprinkling, in his infancy, or in his adult age, if he be not led to put his trust in Jesus Christ — if he remaineth an unbeliever, then this terrible doom is pronounced upon him — “He that believeth not shall be damned.” I am not aware that any Protestant Church in England teaches the doctrine of baptismal regeneration except one, and that happens to be the corporation which with none too much humility calls itself *the* Church of England. This very powerful sect does not teach this doctrine merely through a section of its ministers, who might charitably be considered as evil branches of the vine, but it openly, boldly, and plainly declares this doctrine in her own appointed standard, the Book of Common Prayer, and that in words so express, that while language is the channel of conveying intelligible sense, no process short of violent wresting from their plain meaning can ever make them say anything else.

Here are the words: we quote them from the Catechism which is intended for the instruction of youth, and is naturally very plain and simple, since it would be foolish to trouble the young with metaphysical refinements. The child is asked its name, and then questioned, “Who gave you this name?” *“My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”* Is not this definite and plain enough? I prize the words for their candour; they could not speak more plainly. Three times over the thing is put, lest there should be any doubt in it. The word *regeneration* may, by some sort of juggling, be made to mean something else, but here there can be no misunderstanding. The child is not only made “a member of Christ” — union to Jesus is no mean spiritual gift — but he is made in baptism “the child of God” also; and, since the rule is, “if children then heirs,” he is also made “an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” Nothing can be more plain. I venture to say that while honesty remains on earth the meaning of these words will not admit of dispute. It is clear as noon day that, as the Rubric hath it, “Fathers, mothers, masters, and dames, are to cause their children, servants, and apprentices,” no matter how idle, giddy, or wicked they may be, to learn the Catechism, and to say that in baptism they were made members of Christ and children of God. The form for the administration of this baptism is scarcely less plain and outspoken, seeing

that thanks are expressly returned unto Almighty God, because the person baptized is regenerate. *“Then shall the priest say, ‘Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ’s Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.’”* Nor is this all, for to leave no mistake, we have the words of the thanksgiving prescribed, *“Then shall the priest say, ‘We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church.’”*

This, then, is the clear and unmistakable teaching of a Church calling itself Protestant. I am not now dealing at all with the question of infant baptism: I have nothing to do with that this morning. I am now considering the question of baptismal regeneration, whether in adults or infants, or ascribed to sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Here is a Church which teaches every Lord’s day in the Sunday-school, and should, according to the Rubric, teach openly in the Church, all children that they were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven when they were baptized! Here is a professedly Protestant Church, which, every time its minister goes to the font, declares that every person there receiving baptism is there and then “regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ’s Church.”

“But,” I hear many good people exclaim, “there are many good clergymen in the Church who do not believe in baptismal regeneration.” To this my answer is prompt. Why then do they belong to a Church which teaches that doctrine in the plainest terms? I am told that many in the Church of England preach against her own teaching. I know they do, and herein I rejoice in their enlightenment, but I question, gravely question their morality. To take oath that I sincerely assent and consent to a doctrine which I do not believe, would to my conscience appear little short of perjury, if not absolute downright perjury; but those who do so must be judged by their own Lord. For me to take money for defending what I do not believe — for me to take the money of a Church, and then to preach against what are most evidently its doctrines — I say *for me* to do this (I judge others as I would that they should judge me) for me, or for any other

simple, honest man to do so, were an atrocity so great, that if I had perpetrated the deed, I should consider myself out of the pale of truthfulness, honesty, and common morality. Sirs, when I accepted the office of minister of this congregation, I looked to see what were your articles of faith; if I had not believed them I should not have accepted your call, and when I change my opinions, rest assured that as an honest man I shall resign the office, for how could I profess one thing in your declaration of faith, and quite another thing in my own preaching? Would I accept your pay, and then stand up every Sabbath-day and talk against the doctrines of your standards? For clergymen to swear or say that they give their solemn assent and consent to what they do not believe is one of the grossest pieces of immorality perpetrated in England, and is most pestilential in its influence, since it directly teaches men to lie whenever it seems necessary to do so in order to get a living or increase their supposed usefulness: it is in fact an open testimony from priestly lips that at least in ecclesiastical matters falsehood may express truth, and truth itself is a mere unimportant nonentity. I know of nothing more calculated to debauch the public mind than a want of straightforwardness in ministers; and when worldly men hear ministers denouncing the very things which their own Prayer Book teaches, they imagine that words have no meaning among ecclesiastics, and that vital differences in religion are merely a matter of tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum, and that it does not much matter what a man does believe so long as he is charitable towards other people. If baptism does regenerate people, let the fact be preached with a trumpet tongue, and let no man be ashamed of his belief in it. If this be really their creed, by all means let them have full liberty for its propagation. My brethren, those are honest Churchmen in this matter who, subscribing to the Prayer Book, believe in baptismal regeneration, and preach it plainly. God forbid that we should censure those who believe that baptism saves the soul, because they adhere to a Church which teaches the same doctrine. So far they are honest men; and in England, where else, let them never lack a full toleration. Let us oppose their teaching by all Scriptural and intelligent means, but let us respect their courage in plainly giving us their views. I hate their doctrine, but I love their honesty; and as they speak but what they believe to be true, let them speak it out, and the more clearly the better. Out with it, sirs, be it what it may, but do let us know what you mean. For my part, I love to stand foot to foot with an honest foeman. To

open warfare, bold and true hearts raise no objection but the ground of quarrel; it is covert enmity which we have most cause to fear, and best reason to loathe. That crafty kindness which inveigles me to sacrifice principle is the serpent in the grass — deadly to the incautious wayfarer. Where union and friendship are not cemented by truth, they are an unhallowed confederacy. It is time that there should be an end put to the flirtations of honest men with those who believe one way and swear another. If men believe baptism works regeneration, let them say so; but if they do not so believe it in their hearts, and yet subscribe, and yet more, get their livings by subscribing to words asserting it, let them find congenial associates among men who can equivocate and shuffle, for honest men will neither ask nor accept their friendship.

We ourselves are not dubious on this point, we protest that persons are not saved by being baptized. In such an audience as this, I am almost ashamed to go into the matter, because you surely know better than to be misled. Nevertheless, for the good of others we will drive at it. We hold that persons are not saved by baptism, for we think, first of all that *it seems out of character with the spiritual religion which Christ came to teach*, that he should make salvation depend upon mere ceremony. Judaism might possibly absorb the ceremony by way of type into her ordinances essential to eternal life; for it was religion of types and shadows. The false religions of the heathen might inculcate salvation by a physical process, but Jesus Christ claims for his faith that it is purely spiritual, and how could he connect regeneration with a peculiar application of aqueous fluid? I cannot see how it would be a spiritual gospel, but I can see how it would be mechanical, if I were sent forth to teach that the mere dropping of so many drops upon the brow, or even the plunging a person in water could save the soul. This seems to me to be the most mechanical religion now existing, and to be on a par with the praying windmills of Thibet, or the climbing up and down of Pilate's staircase to which Luther subjected himself in the days of his darkness. The operation of water-baptism does not appear even to my faith to touch the point involved in the regeneration of the soul. What is the necessary connection between water and the overcoming of sin? I cannot see any connection which can exist between sprinkling, or immersion, and regeneration, so that the one shall necessarily be tied to the other in the absence of faith. Used by faith, had God commanded it, miracles might be wrought; but without faith or even

consciousness, as in the case of babes, how can spiritual benefits be connected necessarily with the sprinkling of water? If this be your teaching, that regeneration goes with baptism, I say it looks like the teaching of a spurious Church, which has craftily invented a mechanical salvation to deceive ignorant, sensual, and grovelling minds, rather than the teaching of the most profoundly spiritual of all teachers, who rebuked Scribes and Pharisees for regarding outward rites as more important than inward grace.

But it strikes me that a more forcible argument is that *the dogma is not supported by facts*. Are all persons who are baptized children of God? Well, let us look at the divine family. Let us mark their resemblance to their glorious Parent! Am I untruthful if I say that thousands of those who were baptized in their infancy are now in our goals? You can ascertain the fact if you please, by application to prison authorities. Do you believe that these men, many of whom have been living by plunder, felony, burglary, or forgery, are regenerate? If so, the Lord deliver us from such regeneration. Are these villains members of Christ? If so, Christ has sadly altered since the day when he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Has he really taken baptized drunkards and harlots to be members of his body? Do you not revolt at the supposition? It is a well-known fact that baptized persons have been hanged. Surely it can hardly be right to hang the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven! Our sheriffs have much to answer for when they officiate at the execution of the children of God, and suspend the members of Christ on the gallows! What a detestable farce is that which is transacted at the open grave, when “a dear brother” who has died drunk is buried in a “sure and certain hope of the resurrection of eternal life,” and the prayer that “when we shall depart this life we may rest in Christ, as our hope is that this our brother doth.” Here is a regenerate brother, who having defiled the village by constant uncleanness and bestial drunkenness, died without a sign of repentance, and yet the professed minister of God solemnly accords him funeral rites which are denied to unbaptized innocents, and puts the reprobate into the earth in “sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.” If old Rome in her worst days ever perpetrated a grosser piece of imposture than this, I do not read things aright; if it does not require a Luther to cry down this hypocrisy as much as Popery ever did, then I do not even know that twice two make four. Do we find — we who baptize on profession of faith, and

baptize by immersion in a way which is confessed to be correct, though not allowed by some to be absolutely necessary to its validity — do we who baptize in the name of the sacred Trinity as others do, do we find that baptism regenerates? *We do not.* Neither in the righteous nor the wicked do we find regeneration wrought by baptism. We have never met with one believer, however instructed in divine things, who could trace his regeneration to his baptism; and on the other hand, we confess it with sorrow, but still with no surprise, that we have seen those whom we have ourselves baptized, according to apostolic precedent, go back into the world and wander into the foulest sin, and their baptism has scarcely been so much as a restraint to them, because they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Facts all show that whatever good there may be in baptism, it certainly does not make a man “a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” or else many thieves, whoremongers, drunkards, fornicators, and murderers, are members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Facts, brethren, are against this Popish doctrine; and facts are stubborn things.

Yet further, I am persuaded *that the performance styled baptism by the Prayer Book is not at all likely to regenerate and save.* How is the thing done? One is very curious to know when one hears of an operation which makes men members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, how the thing is done. It must in itself be a holy thing truthful in all its details, and edifying in every portion. Now, we will suppose we have a company gathered round the water, be it more or less, and the process of regeneration is about to be performed. We will suppose them all to be *godly people*. The clergyman officiating is a profound believer in the Lord Jesus, and the father and mother are exemplary Christians, and the godfathers and godmothers are all gracious persons. We will suppose this — it is a supposition fraught with charity, but it may be correct. What are these godly people supposed to say? Let us look to the Prayer Book. The clergyman is suppose to tell these people, “*Ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his gospel to grant all these things that ye have prayed for: which promise he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform. Wherefore, after this promise made by Christ, this infant must also faithfully, for his part, promise by you that are his sureties (until he come of age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God’s holy*

Word, and obediently keep his commandments.” This small child is to promise to do this, or more truly others are to take upon themselves to promise, and even vow that he shall do so. But we must not break the quotation, and therefore let us return to the Book. “I demand therefore, dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?” Answers “I renounce them all.” That is to say, on the name and behalf of this tender infant about to be baptized, these godly people, these enlightened Christian people, these who know better, who are not dupes, who know all the while that they are promising impossibilities — renounce on behalf of this child what they find it very hard to renounce for themselves — “all covetous desires of the world and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that they will not follow nor be led by them.” How can they harden their faces to utter such a false promise, such a mockery of renunciation before the presence of the Father Almighty? Might not angels weep as they hear the awful promise uttered? Then in the presence of high heaven they profess on behalf of this child that he steadfastly believes the creed, when they know, or might pretty shrewdly judge that the little creature is not yet a steadfast believer in anything, much less in Christ’s going down into hell. Mark, they do not say merely that the babe *shall* believe the creed, but they affirm that he does, for they answer in the child’s name, “All this I steadfastly believe. Not we steadfastly believe,” but *I*, the little baby there, unconscious of all their professions and confessions of faith. In answer to the question, “Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?” they reply for the infant, “That is my desire.” Surely the infant has no desire in the matter, or at the least, no one has been authorized to declare any desires on his behalf. But this is not all, for then these godly, intelligent people next promise on the behalf of the infant, that “he shall obediently keep all God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life.” Now, I ask you, dear friends, you who know what true religion means, can you walk in all God’s holy commandments yourselves? Dare you make this day a vow on your own part, that you would renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh? Dare you, before God, make such a promise as that? You desire such holiness, you earnestly strive after it, but you look for it

from God's promise, not from your own. If you dare make such vows I doubt your knowledge of your own hearts and of the spirituality of God's law. But even if you could do this for yourself, would you venture to make such a promise for any other person? For the best-born infant on earth? Come, brethren, what say you? Is not your reply ready and plain? There is not room for two opinions among men determined to observe truth in all their ways and words. I can understand a simple, ignorant rustic, who has never learned to read, doing all this at the command of a priest and under the eye of a squire. I can even understand persons doing this when the Reformation was in its dawn, and men had newly crept out of the darkness of Popery; but I cannot understand gracious, godly people, standing at the font to insult the all-gracious Father with vows and promises framed upon a fiction, and involving practical falsehood. How dare intelligent believers in Christ to utter words which they know in their conscience to be wickedly aside from truth? When I shall be able to understand the process by which gracious men so accommodate their consciences, even then I shall have a confirmed belief that the God of truth never did and never will confirm a spiritual blessing of the highest order in connection with the utterance of such false promises and untruthful vows. My brethren, does it not strike you that declarations so fictitious are not likely to be connected with a new birth wrought by the Spirit of truth?

I have not done with this point, I must take another case, and suppose the sponsors and others to be *ungodly*, and that is no hard supposition, for in many cases we know that godfathers and parents have no more thought of religion than that idolatrous hollowed stone around which they gather. When these sinners have taken their places, what are they about to say? Why, they are about to make the solemn vows I have already recounted in your hearing! Totally irreligious they are, but yet they promise for the baby what they never did, and never thought of doing for themselves — they promise on behalf of this child, “that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments.” My brethren, do not think I speak severely here. Really I think there is something here to make mockery for devils. Let every honest man lament, that ever God's Church should tolerate such a thing as this, and that there should be found gracious people who will feel grieved because I, in all kindness of heart, rebuke the atrocity. Unregenerate sinners promising for a poor babe that he shall keep all

God's holy commandments which they themselves wantonly break every day! How can anything but the longsuffering of God endure this? What! not speak against it? The very stones in the street might cry out against the infamy of wicked men and women promising that another should renounce the devil and all his works, while they themselves serve the devil and do his works with greediness! As a climax to all this, I am asked to believe that God accepts that wicked promise, and as the result of it, regenerates that child. You cannot believe in regeneration by this operation, whether saints or sinners are the performers. Take them to be godly, then they are wrong for doing what their conscience must condemn; view them as ungodly, and they are wrong for promising what they know they cannot perform; and in neither case can God accept such worship, much less infallibly append regeneration to such a baptism as this.

But you will say "Why do *you* cry out against it?" I cry out against it because I believe that baptism does not save the soul, and that *the preaching of it has a wrong and evil influence upon men*. We meet with persons who, when we tell them that they must be born again, assure us that they were born again when they were baptized. The number of these persons is increasing, fearfully increasing, until all grades of society are misled by this belief. How can any man stand up in his pulpit and say Ye must be born again to his congregation, when he has already assured them, by his own "unfeigned assent and consent" to it, that they are themselves, every one of them, born again in baptism. What is he to do with them? Why, my dear friends, the gospel then has no voice; they have rammed this ceremony down its throat and it cannot speak to rebuke sin. The man who has been baptized or sprinkled says, "*I am saved, I am a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven*. Who are you, that you should rebuke *me*? Call *me* to repentance? Call *me* to a new life? What better life can I have? for I *am* a member of Christ — a part of Christ's body. What! rebuke *me*? I am a child of God. Cannot you see it in my face? No matter what my walk and conversation is, I am a child of God. Moreover, I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. It is true, I drink and swear, and all that, but you know I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, for when I die, though I live in constant sin, you will put me in the grave, and tell everybody that I died 'in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.'"

Now, what can be the influence of such preaching as this upon our beloved England? Upon my dear and blessed country? What but the worst of ills? If I loved her not, but loved myself most, I might be silent here, but, loving England, I cannot and dare not; and having soon to render an account before my God, whose servant I hope I am, I must free myself from this evil as well as from every other, or else on my head may be the doom of souls.

Here let me bring in another point. It is a most fearful fact, that *in no age since the Reformation has Popery made such fearful strides in England as during the last few years*. I had comfortably believed that Popery was only feeding itself upon foreign subscriptions, upon a few titled perverts, and imported monks and nuns. I dreamed that its progress was not real. In fact, I have often smiled at the alarm of many of my brethren at the progress of Popery. But, my dear friends, we have been mistaken, grievously mistaken. If you will read a valuable paper in the magazine called "Christian Work," those of you who are not acquainted with it will be perfectly startled at its revelations. This great city is now covered with a network of monks, and priests, and sisters of mercy, and the conversions made are not by ones or twos, but by scores, till England is being regarded as the most hopeful spot for Romish missionary enterprise in the whole world; and at the present moment there is not a mission which is succeeding to anything like the extent which the English mission is. I covet not their money, I despise their sophistries, but I marvel at the way in which they gain their funds for the erection of their ecclesiastical buildings. It really is an alarming matter to see so many of our countrymen going off to that superstition which as a nation we once rejected, and which it was supposed we should never again receive. Popery is making advances such as you would never believe, though a spectator should tell it to you. Close to your very doors, perhaps even in your own houses, you may have evidence ere long of what a march Romanism is making. And to what is it to be ascribed? I say, with every ground of probability, that there is no marvel that Popery should increase when you have two things to make it grow: first of all, the falsehood of those who profess a faith which they do not believe, which is quite contrary to the honesty of the Romanist, who does through evil report and good report hold his faith; and then you have, secondly, this form of error known as baptismal regeneration, and commonly called Puseyism, which is not only Puseyism, but

Church-of-Englandism, because it is in the Prayer Book, as plainly as words can express it — you have this baptismal regeneration preparing stepping-stones to make it easy for men to go to Rome. I have but to open my eyes a little to foresee Romanism rampant everywhere in the future, since its germs are spreading everywhere in the present. In one of our courts of legislature but last Tuesday, the Lord Chief Justice showed his superstition, by speaking of “the risk of the calamity of children dying unbaptized!” Among Dissenters you see a veneration for structures, a modified belief in the sacredness of places, which is idolatry; for to believe in the sacredness of anything but of God and of his own Word, is to idolize, whether it is to believe in the sacredness of the men, the priests, or in the sacredness of the bricks and mortar, or of the fine linen, or what not, which you may use in the worship of God. I see this coming up everywhere — a belief in ceremony, a resting in ceremony, a veneration for altars, fonts, and Churches — a veneration so profound that we must not venture upon a remark, or straightway of sinners we are chief. Here is the essence and soul of Popery, peeping up under the garb of a decent respect for sacred things. It is impossible but that the Church of Rome must spread, when we who are the watch-dogs of the fold are silent, and others are gently and smoothly turfing the road, and making it as soft and smooth as possible, that converts may travel down to the nethermost hell of Popery. We want John Knox back again. Do not talk to me of mild and gentle men, of soft manners and squeamish words, we want the fiery Knox, and even though his vehemence should “ding our pulpits into blads,” it were well if he did but rouse our hearts to action. We want Luther to tell men the truth unmistakably, in homely phrase. The velvet has got into our ministers’ mouths of late, but we must unrobe ourselves of soft raiment, and truth must be spoken, and nothing but truth; for of all lies which have dragged millions down to hell, I look upon this as being one of the most atrocious — that in a Protestant Church there should be found those who swear that baptism saves the soul. Call a man a Baptist, or a Presbyterian, or a Dissenter, or a Churchman, that is nothing to me — if he says that baptism saves the soul, out upon him, out upon him, he states what God n ever taught, what the Bible never laid down, and what ought never to be maintained by men who profess that the Bible, and the whole Bible, is the religion of Protestants.

I have spoken thus much, and there will be some who will say — spoken thus much bitterly. Very well, be it so. Physic is often bitter, but it shall work well, and the physician is not bitter because his medicine is so; or if he be accounted so, it will matter, so long as the patient is cured; at all events, it is no business of the patient whether the physician is bitter or not, his business is with his own soul's health. There is the truth, and I have told it to you; and if there should be one among you, or if there should be one among the readers of this sermon when it is printed, who is resting on baptism, or resting upon ceremonies of any sort, I do beseech you, shake off this venomous faith into the fire as Paul did the viper which fastened on his hand. I pray you do not rest on baptism.

“No outward forms can make you clean,
The leprosy lies deep within.”

I do beseech you to remember that you must have a new heart and a right spirit, and baptism cannot give you these. You must turn from your sins and follow after Christ; you must have such a faith as shall make your life holy and your speech devout, or else you have not the faith of God's elect, and into God's kingdom you shall never come. I pray you never rest upon this wretched and rotten foundation, this deceitful invention of antichrist. O, may God save you from it, and bring you to seek the true rock of refuge for weary souls.

I come with much brevity, and I hope with much earnestness, in the second place, to say that FAITH IS THE INDISPENSABLE REQUISITE TO SALVATION. “He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved; he that *believeth* not shall be damned.” Faith is the one indispensable requisite for salvation. This faith is the gift of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Some men believe not on Jesus; they believe not because they are not of Christ's sheep, as he himself said unto them; but his sheep hear his voice: he knows them and they follow him: he gives to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. What is this believing? Believing consists in two things; first there is *an accrediting of the testimony of God* concerning his Son. God tells you that his Son came into the world and was made flesh, that he lived upon earth for men's sake, that after having spent his life in holiness he was offered up a propitiation for sin, that upon the cross he there and then made expiation — so made expiation for the sins of the world that Whosoever

believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. If you would be saved, you must accredit this testimony which God gives concerning his own Son. Having received this testimony, the next thing is to *confide in it* — indeed here lies, I think, the essence of saving faith, to rest yourself for eternal salvation upon the atonement and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, to have done once for all with all reliance upon feelings or upon doings, and to trust in Jesus Christ and in what he did for your salvation.

This is faith, receiving of the truth of Christ: first knowing it to be true, and then acting upon that belief. Such a faith as this — such real faith as this makes the man henceforth hate sin. How can he love the thing which made t he Saviour bleed? It makes him live in holiness. How can he but seek to honour that God who has loved him so much as to give his Son to die for him. This faith is spiritual in its nature and effects; it operates upon the entire man; it changes his heart, enlightens his judgment, and subdues his will; it subjects him to God's supremacy, and makes him receive God's Word as a little child, willing to receive the truth upon the *ipse dixit* of the divine One; it sanctifies his intellect, and makes him willing to be taught God's Word; it cleanses within; it makes clean the inside of the cup and platter, and it beautifies without; it makes clean the exterior conduct and the inner motive, so that the man, if his faith be true and real, becomes henceforth another man to what he ever was before.

Now that such a faith as this should save the soul, is, I believe, reasonable; yea, more, it is certain, for *we have seen men saved by it* in this very house of prayer. We have seen the harlot lifted out of the Stygian ditch of her sin, and made an honest woman; we have seen the thief reclaimed; we have known the drunkard in hundreds of instances to be sobered; we have observed faith to work such a change, that all the neighbours who have seen it have gazed and admired, even though they hated it; we have seen faith deliver men in the hour of temptation, and help them to consecrate themselves and their substance to God; we have seen, and hope still to see yet more widely, deeds of heroic consecration to God and displays of witness-bearing against the common current of the times, which have proved to us that faith does affect the man, does save the soul. My hearers, if you would be saved, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me urge you with all my heart to look nowhere but to Christ crucified for your salvation. Oh! if you rest upon any ceremony, though it be not

baptism — if you rest upon any other than Jesus Christ, you must perish, as surely as this Book is true. I pray you believe not every spirit, but though I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine than this, let him be accursed, for this, and this alone, is the soul-saving truth which shall regenerate the world — “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Away from all the tag-rags, wax candles, and millinery of Puseyism! away from all the gorgeous pomp of Popery! away from the fonts of Church-of-Englandism! we bid you turn your eyes to that naked cross, where hangs as a bleeding man the Son of God.

“None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”

There is life in a look at the crucified; there is life at this moment for you. Whoever among you can believe in the great love of God towards man in Christ Jesus, you shall be saved. If you can believe that our great Father desireth us to come to him — that he panteth for us — that he calleth us every day with the loud voice of his Son’s wounds; if you can believe now that in Christ there is pardon for transgressions past, and cleansing for years to come; if you can trust him to save you, you have already the marks of regeneration. The work of salvation is commenced in you, so far as the Spirit’s work is concerned: it is finished in you so far as Christ’s work is concerned. O, I would plead with you — lay hold on Jesus Christ. This is *the* foundation: build on it. This is *the* rock of refuge: fly to it. I pray you fly to it now. Life is short: time speeds with eagle’s-wing. Swift as the dove pursued by the hawk, fly, fly poor sinner, to God’s dear Son; now touch the hem of his garment; now look into that dear face, once marred with sorrows for you; look into those eyes, once shedding tears for you. Trust him, and if you find him false, then you must perish; but false you never will find him while this word standeth true, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” God give us this vital, essential faith, without which there is no salvation. Baptized, re-baptized, circumcised, confirmed, fed upon sacraments, and buried in consecrated ground — ye shall all perish except ye believe in him. The word is express and plain — he that believeth not may plead his baptism, may plead anything he likes, “But he that believeth not shall be damned;” for him there is nothing but the wrath of God, the flames of hell, eternal perdition. So Christ declares, and so must it be.

But now to close, there are some who say, “Ah! but baptism is in the text; where do you put that?” That shall be another point, and then we shall have done.

THE BAPTISM IN THE TEXT IS ONE EVIDENTLY CONNECTED WITH FAITH. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” It strikes me, there is no supposition here, that anybody would be baptized who did not believe; or, if there be such a supposition, it is very clearly laid down that his baptism will be of no use to him, for he will be damned, baptized or not, unless he believes. The baptism of the text seems to me — my brethren, if you differ from me I am sorry for it, but I must hold my opinion and out with it — it seems to me that baptism is connected with, nay, directly follows belief. I would not insist too much upon the order of the words, but for other reasons, I think that baptism should follow believing. At any rate it effectually avoids the error we have been combating. A man who knows that he is saved by believing in Christ does not, when he is baptized, lift his baptism into a saving ordinance. In fact, he is the very best protester against that mistake, because he holds that he has no right to be baptized until he is saved. He bears a testimony against baptismal regeneration in his being baptized as professedly an already regenerate person. Brethren, the baptism here meant is a baptism connected with faith, and to this baptism I will admit there is very much ascribed in Scripture. Into that question I am not going; but I do find some very remarkable passages in which baptism is spoken of very strongly. I find this — “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” I find as much as this elsewhere; I know that believer’s baptism itself does not wash away sin, yet it is so the outward sign and emblem of it to the believer, that the thing visible may be described as the thing signified. Just as our Savior said — “This is my body,” when it was not his body, but bread; yet, inasmuch as it represented his body, it was fair and right according to the usage of language to say, “Take, eat, this is my body.” And so, inasmuch as baptism to the believer representeth the washing of sin — it may be called the washing of sin — not that it is so, but that it is to saved souls the outward symbol and representation of what is done by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the man who believes in Christ.

What connection has this baptism with faith? I think it has just this, *baptism is the avowal of faith*; the man was Christ's soldier, but now in baptism he puts on his regimentals. The man believed in Christ, but his faith remained between God and his own soul. In baptism he says to the baptizer, "I believe in Jesus Christ;" he says to the Church, "I unite with you as a believer in the common truths of Christianity;" he saith to the onlooker, "Whatever you may do, as for me, I will serve the Lord." It is the avowal of his faith.

Next, we think baptism is also to the believer a *testimony of his faith*; he does in baptism tell the world what he believes. "I am about," saith he, "to be buried in water. I believe that the Son of God was metaphorically baptized in suffering: I believe he was literally dead and buried." To rise again out of the water sets forth to all men that he believes in the resurrection of Christ. There is a showing forth in the Lord's Supper of Christ's death, and there is a showing forth in baptism of Christ's burial and resurrection. It is a type, a sign, a symbol, a mirror to the world: a looking-glass in which religion is as it were reflected. We say to the onlooker, when he asks what is the meaning of this ordinance, "We mean to set forth our faith that Christ was buried, and that he rose again from the dead, and we avow this death and resurrection to be the ground of our trust."

Again, baptism is also *Faith's taking her proper place*. It is, or should be one of her first acts of obedience. Reason looks at baptism, and says, "Perhaps there is nothing in it; it cannot do me any good." "True," says Faith, "and therefore will I observe it. If it did me some good my selfishness would make me do it, but inasmuch as to my sense there is no good in it, since I am bidden by my Lord thus to fulfil all righteousness, it is my first public declaration that a thing which looks to be unreasonable and seems to be unprofitable, being commanded by God, is law, is law to me. If my Master had told me to pick up six stones and lay them in a row I would do it, without demanding of him, 'What good will it do?' *Cui bono?* is no fit question for soldiers of Jesus. The very simplicity and apparent uselessness of the ordinance should make the believer say, 'Therefore I do it because it becomes the better test to me of my obedience to my Master.'" When you tell your servant to do something, and he cannot comprehend it, if he turns round and says, "Please, sir, what for?"

you are quite clear that he hardly understands the relation between master and servant. So when God tells me to do a thing, if I say, "What for?" I cannot have taken the place which Faith ought to occupy, which is that of simple obedience to whatever the Lord hath said. Baptism is commanded, and Faith obeys because it is commanded, and thus takes her proper place.

Once more, *baptism is a refreshment to Faith*. While we are made up of body and soul as we are, we shall need some means by which the body shall sometimes be stirred up to co-work with the soul. In the Lord's Supper my faith is assisted by the outward and visible sign. In the bread and in the wine I see no superstitious mystery, I see nothing but bread and wine, but in that bread and wine I do see to my faith an assistant. Through the sign my faith sees the thing signified. So in baptism there is no mysterious efficacy in the baptistry or in the water. We attach no reverence to the one or to the other, but we do see in the water and in the baptism such an assistance as brings home to our faith most manifestly our being buried with Christ, and our rising again in newness of life with him. Explain baptism thus, dear friends, and there is no fear of Popery rising out of it. Explain it thus, and we cannot suppose any soul will be led to trust to it; but it takes its proper place among the ordinances of God's house. To lift it up in the other way, and say men are saved by it — ah! my friends, how much of mischief that one falsehood has done and may do, eternity alone will disclose. Would to God another George Fox would spring up in all his quaint simplicity and rude honesty to rebuke the idol-worship of this age; to rail at their holy bricks and mortar, holy lecterns, holy alters, holy surplices, right reverend fathers, and I know not what. These things are not holy. God is holy; his truth is holy; holiness belongs not to the carnal and the material, but to the spiritual. O that a trumpet-tongue would cry out against the superstition of the age. I cannot, as George Fox did, give up baptism and the Lord's Supper, but I would infinitely sooner do it, counting it the smaller mistake of the two than perpetrate and assist in perpetrating the uplifting of baptism and the Lord's Supper out of their proper place. O my beloved friends, the comrades of my struggles and witnessings, cling to the salvation of faith, and abhor the salvation of priests. If I am not mistaken, the day will come when we shall have to fight for a simple spiritual religion far more than we do now. We have been cultivating friendship with those who are either unscriptural in creed or else dishonest, who either believe baptismal

regeneration, or profess that they do, and swear before God that they do when they do not. The time is come when there shall be no more truce or parley between God's servants and the time-servers. The time is come when those who follow God must follow God, and those who try to trim and dress themselves and find out a way which is pleasing to the flesh and gentle to carnal desires, must go their way. A great winnowing time is coming to God's saints, and we shall be clearer one of these days than we now are from union with those who are upholding Popery, under the pretence of teaching Protestantism. We shall be clear, I say, of those who teach salvation by baptism, instead of salvation by the blood of our blessed Master, Jesus Christ. O may the Lord gird up your loins. Believe me, it is no trifle. It may be that on this ground Armageddon shall be fought. Here shall come the great battle between Christ and his saints on the one hand, and the world, and forms, and ceremonies, on the other. If we are overcome here, there may be years of blood and persecution, and tossing to and fro between darkness and light; but if we are brave and bold, and flinch not here, but stand to God's truth, the future of England may be bright and glorious. O for a truly reformed Church in England, and a godly race to maintain it! The world's future depends on it under God, for in proportion as truth is marred at home, truth is maimed abroad. Out of any system which teaches salvation by baptism must spring infidelity, an infidelity which the false Church already seems willing to nourish and foster beneath her wing. God save this favoured land from the brood of her own established religion. Brethren, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not afraid of any sudden fear nor calamity when it cometh, for he who trusteth to the Lord, mercy shall compass him about, and he who is faithful to God and Christ shall hear it said at the last, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord." May the Lord bless this word for Christ's sake.

[Note. — Having been informed that the whole of the burial service is not usually read at executions, I have, for the sake of fairness, altered the passage upon page 318 [in the author's edition], although it strikes me that I might justly have retained it, since the rubric of the Church and not the practice of some of its ministers is that with which we must deal. The rubric says, "The office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves." The victim of our capital punishment is not by this rubric

shut out from the privileges (?) of the Anglican burial service, unless his condemnation may be viewed as tantamount to excommunication, which I can hardly think be the case, since many condemned persons receive the sacrament. I have also altered an incorrect expression on page 316, which has been pointed out to me by both friends and foes. May God grant that the controversy which this sermon has commenced may lead to the advancement of his truth, and the enlightenment of many.]

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST, AND NOT TO THE FONT

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 24th, 1864, by the

Revelation C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them”

— Mark 10:13-16

My attention has been specially directed to this passage by the fact that it has been quoted against me by most of the authors of those sermons and letters which are, by a stretch of imagination, called “replies” to my Replies they certainly are not, except to one another. I marvel that a Church so learned as the Anglican, cannot produce something a little more worthy of the point in hand. The various authors may possibly have read my discourse, but by reason of mental absorption in other meditations, or perhaps through the natural disturbance of mind caused by guilty consciences, they have talked with confusion of words, and have only been successful in refuting themselves, and answering one another. They must have been aiming at something far removed from my sermon, or else I must give them credit for being the worst shots that ever practiced with polemical artillery. They do not so

much as touch the target in its extreme corners, much less in its centre. The whole question is, Do you believe that baptism regenerates? If so — prove that your belief is Scriptural! Do you believe that baptism does not regenerate? Then justify your swearing that it does? Who will reply to this? He shall merit and bear the palm.

The Scripture before us is by several of the champions on the other side exhibited to the people as a rebuke to me. Their reasoning is rather ingenious than forcible: forsooth, because the disciples incurred the displeasure of Jesus Christ by keeping back the little children from coming to *Him*, therefore Jesus Christ is greatly displeased with me, and with all others like me, for keeping children from *the font*, and the performance there enacted; and specially displeased with me for exposing the Anglican doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration! Observe the reasoning — because Jesus was much displeased with disciples for hindering parents from seeking a blessing upon their children, therefore he is much displeased with us who do not believe in godfathers and godmothers, or the signing of the cross on the infant brow. I must say at the outset that this is rather a leap of argument, and would not ordinarily be thought conclusive, but this we may readily overlook, since we have long ceased to hope for reasonable arguments from those who support a cause based upon absurdity. My brethren, I concluded that there must be something forcible in such a text as this, or my opponents would not be so eager to secure it; I have therefore care fully looked at it, and as I have viewed it, it has opened up to me with a sacred splendour of grace. In this incident the very heart of Christ is published to poor sinners, and we may clearly perceive the freeness and the fulness of the mighty grace of the Redeemer of men, who is willing to receive the youngest child as well as the oldest man; and is greatly displeased with any who would keep back seeking souls from coming to him, or loving hearts from bringing others to receive his blessing.

I. In handling this text in what I believe to be its true light, I shall commence, first of all, by observing that THIS TEXT HAS NOT THE SHADOW OF THE SHADE OF THE GHOST OF A CONNECTION WITH BAPTISM. There is no line of connection so substantial as a spider's web between this incident and baptism, or at least my imagination is not vivid enough to conceive one. This I will prove to you, if you will follow me for a moment.

It is very clear, Dear Friends, that *these young children were not brought to Jesus Christ by their friends to be baptized*. “They brought young children to him, that he should touch them,” says Mark. Matthew describes the children as being brought “that he would put his hands on them and pray,” but there is not a hint about their being baptized; no godfathers or godmothers had been provided, and no sign of the cross was requested. Surely the parents themselves knew tolerably well what it was they desired, and they would not have expressed themselves so dubiously as to ask him to touch them, when they meant that he should baptize them. The parents evidently had no thought of regeneration by baptism, and brought the children for quite another end.

In the next place, *if they brought the children to Jesus Christ to be baptized, they brought them to the wrong person*; for the Evangelist, John, in the fourth chapter, and the second verse, expressly assures us that Jesus Christ baptized not, but his disciples: this settles the question once for all, and proves beyond all dispute that there is no connection between this incident and baptism.

But you will say, “*Perhaps they brought the children to be baptized by the disciples?*” Brethren, the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants, and this is clear from the case in hand. If they had been in the habit of baptizing infants, would they have rebuked the parents for bringing them? If it had been a customary thing for parents to bring children with such an object, would the disciples who had been in the constant habit of performing the ceremony, have rebuked them for attending to it? Would any Church clergyman rebuke parents for bringing their children to be baptized? If he did so, he would act absurdly contrary to his own views and practice; and we cannot therefore imagine that if infant baptism had been the accepted practice, the disciples could have acted so absurdly as to rebuke the parents for bringing their little ones. It is obvious that such could not have been the practice of the disciples who were rebuked.

Moreover, and here is an argument which seems to me to have great force in it, *when Jesus Christ rebuked his disciples, then was the time if ever in his life, to have openly spoken concerning infant baptism, godfathers and godmothers, and the whole affair*. If he wished to rebuke his disciples most effectually, how could he have done it better than by saying, “Wherefore keep ye these children back? I have ordained that they shall be baptized; I

have expressly commanded that they shall be regenerated and made members of my body in baptism; how dare you then, in opposition to my will, keep them back?" But no, dear friends, our Saviour never said a word about "the laver of regeneration," or, "the quickening dew," when he rebuked them — not a single sentence. Had he done so, the season would have been most appropriate if it had been his intention to teach the practice; in the whole of his life, there is no period in which a discourse upon infant regeneration in baptism could have been more appropriate than on this occasion, and yet not a single sentence about it comes from the Saviour's lips.

To close all, *Jesus Christ did not baptize the children*. Our Evangelist does not inform us that he exclaimed, "Where are the godfathers and godmothers?" It is not recorded that he called for a font, or a Prayer Book? No; but "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them," and dismissed them without a drop of the purifying element. Now, if this event had any connection with baptism whatever, it was the most appropriate occasion for infant baptism to have been practiced. Why, it would have ended for ever the controversy. There may be some men in the world who would have raised the question of engrafting infants into the body of Christ's Church by baptism after all this, but I am certain no honest man would have done so who reverently accepted Christ as his spiritual leader. I, my brethren, would sooner be dumb than speak a single word against an ordinance which Christ himself instituted and practiced; and if on this occasion he had but sprinkled one of these infants, given him a Christian name, signed him with a cross, accepted the vows of his godparents, and thanked God for his regeneration, then the question would have been settled for ever, and some of us would have been saved a world of abuse, besides escaping no end of mistakes, for which we are condemned, in the judgment of many good people, for whom we have some affection, though for their judgment we have no respect.

So you see the parents did not ask baptismal regeneration; Christ did not personally baptize; the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants, or else they would not have rebuked the parents; Christ did not speak about baptism on the occasion, and he did not baptize the little ones.

I will put a case to you which may exhibit the weakness of my opponents' position. Suppose a denomination should rise up which should teach that babes should be allowed to partake at the Lord's Table. Such teaching could plead precedents of great antiquity, for you are aware that at one period, infant communion was allowed, and logically too; for if an infant has a right to baptism, it has a right to come to the Lord's Table. For years children were brought to the Lord's Table, but rather inconvenient accidents occurred, and therefore the thing was dropped as being unseemly. But if some one should revive the error, and try to prove that infants are to come to the Lord's Supper, he might prove it from this passage quite as clearly as our friends can prove infant baptism from it. Moreover do not forget that even if infant baptism could be proved from this text, the ceremony prescribed in the Prayer Book is quite as far from being established. Whether the baptism of infants may or may not be proved from other Scriptures I cannot now stay to enquire, but even if it can be, what are we to say for godfathers or godmothers, or the assertion that in baptism children are made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven?" Truly I might as well prove vaccination from the text before me, as the performance which the Prayer Book calls "infant baptism." I do not hesitate to say that I could prove any earthly thing, if I might but have such reasoning granted to me as that which proved infant baptism from this passage. There is no possible connection between the two. The teaching of the passage is very plain and very clear, and baptism has been imported into it, and not found in it. As a quaint writer has well said, "These doctrines are raised from the text as our collectors raise a tax upon indigent, nonsolvent people, by coming armed with the law and a constable to distrain for that which is not to be had. Certainly never was text so strained and distrained to pay what it never owed; never man so racked to confess what he never thought; never was a pumice stone so squeezed for water which it never held." Still hundreds will catch at this straw, and cry, "Did not Jesus say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me?'" To these we give this one word, see that ye read the Word as it is written, and you will find no water in it but Jesus only. Are the water and Christ the same thing? Is bringing a child to a font bringing the child to Christ? Nay, here is a wide difference, as wide as between Rome and Jerusalem, as wide as between Anti-Christ and Christ, between false doctrine and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Now, for our second and much more pleasing task, WHY THEN WAS JESUS CHRIST DISPLEASED?

Read the passage and at once the answer comes to you. He was displeased with his disciples for two reasons: first, *because they discouraged those who would bring others to him*; and secondly, *because they discouraged those who themselves were anxious to come to him*. They did not discourage those who were coming to a font, they discouraged those who were coming to Jesus. There is a mighty distinction ever to be held between the font and Christ, between the sprinkling of the priest and living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, *his disciples discouraged those who would bring others to him*. This is a great sin, and wherever it is committed Jesus Christ is greatly displeased, for a true desire to see others saved is wrought in the believer by God the Holy Spirit, who thus renders the called ones the means of bringing wandering sheep into the fold. In this case they discouraged those who would bring *children* to him to be blessed. How can we bring children to Jesus Christ to be blessed? We cannot do it in a corporeal sense, for Jesus is not here, “he is risen;” but we can bring our children in a true, real, and spiritual sense. We take them up in the arms of our *prayer*. I hope many of us, so soon as our children saw the light, if not before, presented them to God with this anxious prayer, that they might sooner die than live to disgrace their father’s God. We only desired children that we might in them live over again another life of service to God; and when we looked into their young faces, we never asked wealth for them, nor fame, nor anything else, but that they might be dear unto God, and that their names might be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. We did then bring our children to Christ as far as we could do it, by presenting them before God, by earnest prayer on their behalf. And have we ceased to bring them to Christ? Nay, I hope we seldom bow the knee without praying for our children. Our daily cry is, “O, that they might live before thee!” God knows that nothing would give us more joy than to see evidence of their conversion; our souls would almost leap out of our bodies with joy, if we should but know that they were the children of the living God. Nor has this privilege been denied to us, for there are some here who can rejoice in a converted household. Truly we can say with the apostle Paul, “I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth.” We continue,

therefore, to bring them to Christ by daily, constant, earnest prayer on their behalf. So soon as they become of years capable of understanding the things of God, we endeavour to bring them to Christ by *teaching them the truth*. Hence our Sabbath-schools, hence the use of the Bible and family prayer, and catechizing at home. Any person who shall forbid us to pray for our children, will incur Christ's high displeasure; and any who shall say, "Do not teach your children; they will be converted in God's own time if it be his purpose, therefore leave them to run wild in the streets," will certainly both "sin against the child" and the Lord Jesus. We might as well say, "If that piece of ground is to grow a harvest, it will do so if it be God's good pleasure; therefore leave it, and let the weeds spring up and cover it; do not endeavour for a moment to kill the weeds, or to sow the good seed." Why, such reasoning as this would be not only cruel to our children, but grievously displeasing to Christ. Parents! I do hope you are all endeavouring to bring your children to Christ by teaching them the things of God. Let them not be strangers to the plan of salvation. Never let it be said that a child of yours reached years in which his conscience could act, and he could judge between good and evil, without knowing the doctrine of the atonement, without understanding the great substitutionary work of Christ. Set before your child life and death, hell and heaven, judgment and mercy, his own sin, and Christ's most precious blood; and as you set these before him, labour with him, persuade him, as the apostle did his congregation, with tears and weeping, to turn unto the Lord; and your prayers and supplications shall be heard so that the Spirit of God shall bring them to Jesus. How much more like the Scripture will such labours be than if you were to sing the following very pretty verse which disfigures Roundell Palmer's "Book of Praise!" —

"Though thy conception was in sin,
A sacred bathing thou hast had;
And though thy birth unclean has been,
A blameless babe thou now art made.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my dear, sweet baby, sleep."

I cannot tell you how much I owe to the solemn words of my good mother. It was the custom on Sunday evenings, while we were yet little children, for her to stay at home with us, and then we sat round the table

and read verse by verse, and she explained the Scripture to us. After that was done, then came the time of pleading; there was a little piece of “Alleyn’s Alarm,” or of Baxter’s “Call to the Unconverted,” and this was read with pointed observations made to each of us as we sat round the table; and the question was asked how long it would be before we would think about our state, how long before we would seek the Lord. Then came a mother’s prayer, and some of the words of a mother’s prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is grey. I remember on one occasion her praying thus: “Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ.” That thought of a mother’s bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience and stirred my heart. This pleading with them for God and with God for them is the true way to bring children to Christ. Sunday-school teachers! you have a high and noble work, press forward in it. In our schools you do not try to bring children to the baptistry for regeneration, you point them away from ceremonies; if I know the teachers of this school aright, I know you are trying to bring your classes to Christ. Let Christ be the sum and substance of your teaching in the school. Young men and young women, in your classes lift up Christ, lift him up on high; and if anybody shall say to you, “Why do you thus talk to the children?” you can say, “Because my soul yearns towards them, and I pant for their conversion;” and if any should afterwards object, you can remember that Jesus is greatly displeased with *them*, and not with you, for you only obey the injunction, “Feed my lambs.”

The case in our text is that of children, but objectors rise up who disapprove of endeavours to bring any sort of people to Christ by faith and prayer. There are some who spend their nights in the streets seeking after the poor harlot, and I have heard many harsh observations made about their work; some will say it is ridiculous to expect that any of those who have spent their days in debauchery should be converted. We are told that the most of those who are taken into the refuges go back and become as depraved as ever; I believe that to be a very sad and solemn truth; but I believe, if I or anyone else shall urge that or anything else as a reason why my brethren should not seek the harlot, that Jesus would be greatly displeased; for any man who stands between a soul-seeker and the divine object of getting a blessing for the sinner’s soul, excites the wrath of

Christ. Some have hopes of our convicts and criminals; but every now and then there is an outcry against those who even believe it possible for a transport or a ticket-of-leave man to be converted. But Jesus is greatly displeased with any who shall say about the work, "It is too hard; it is impossible." My brethren in Christ, labour for souls of all sorts: for your children and for those who are past the threescore years and ten. Seek out the drunkard; go after the thief; despise not the poor down-trodden slave; let every race, let every colour, let every age, let every profession, let every nation, be the object of your soul's prayers. You live in this world, I hope, to bring souls to Jesus; you are Christ's magnets with which through his Holy Spirit he will attract hearts of steel; you are his heralds, you are to invite wanderers to come to the banquet; you are his messengers, you are to compel them to come in that his house may be filled; and if the devil tells you will not succeed, and if the world tells you that you are too feeble and have not talent enough, never mind, Jesus would be greatly displeased with you if you should take any heed to them; and meanwhile he is greatly displeased with your adversaries for endeavouring to stop you. Beloved, this is why Jesus Christ was greatly displeased.

A second ground of displeasure must be noticed. These children, it strikes me, and I think there is good reason for the belief, *themselves desired to come to Christ to obtain a blessing*. They are called "little children," which term does not necessarily involve their being infants of six months or a year; indeed, it is clear, as I will show in a moment, that they were not such little children as to be unconscious babes. They were "infants," according to our version of Luke, but then you know the English word "infant" includes a considerable range of age, for every person in his minority is legally considered to be an infant, though he may be able to talk to any amount. We do not, however, desire to translate the text with so great a license. There is no necessity in the language used that these should have been anything but what they are said to be — "little children." It is evident they could walk, because in Luke it is said, "Jesus called *them*;" the gender of the Greek pronoun used there refers it to the children, not to the persons, nor to the disciples. Jesus called them, he called the children, which he would hardly have done if they could not comprehend his call: and he said, "Suffer the little children to come," which implies that they could come, and doubtless they did come, with cheerful faces, expecting to get the blessing. These perhaps may have been some of those very

children, who, a short time after, pulled down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way, and cried, “Hosanna,” when the Saviour said, “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.” Now Christ was greatly displeased with his disciples for pushing back these boys and girls. They did, as some old folks do now-a-days, who cry out — “Stand back, you boys and girls! we do not want you here; we do not want children to fill up the place; we only want grown-up people.” They pushed them back; they thought that Christ would have too much to do, if he attended to the juveniles. Here comes out this principle, that we must expect Christ’s displeasure, if we attempt to keep anybody back from coming to Christ, even though it be the youngest child. You ask how persons can come to Christ now? They cannot come corporeally, but they can come by simple prayer and humble faith. Faith is the way to Jesus, baptism is not. When Jesus says, “Come *unto me* all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” he did not mean, “be baptized,” did he? No; and so when he said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” he did not mean, “Baptize them,” did he? Coming to Jesus Christ is quite a different thing from coming to a font. Coming to Christ means laying hold upon Christ with the hand of faith; looking to him for my life, my pardon, my salvation, my everything. If there be a poor little child here who is saying in her little heart, or his little heart, “I would like to come to Christ, O that I might be pardoned while I am yet a little one” — come, little lamb; come, and welcome. Did I hear your cry? Was it this?

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
 Look upon a little child;
 Pity my simplicity,
 Suffer me to come to thee.”

Dear little one, Jesus will not despise your lisplings, nor will his servant keep you back. Jesus calls you, come and receive his blessing. If any of you say a word to keep the young heart back, Jesus will be displeased with you. Now I am afraid some do that; those, for instance, who think that the gospel is not for little children. Many of my brethren, I am sorry to say, preach in such a way that there is no hope of children ever getting any good by their preaching. I cannot glory in learning or eloquence, but in this one thing I may rejoice, that there is always a number of happy children here, who are quite as attentive as any of my audience. I do love

to think that the gospel is suitable to little children. There are boys and girls in many of our Sabbath-school classes down below stairs who are as truly converted to God as any of us. Nay, and if you were to speak with them about the things of God, though you should get to the knotty points of election and predestination, you would find those boys and girls well taught in the things of the kingdom: they know free will from free grace, and you cannot puzzle them when you come to talk about the work of Jesus and the work of the Spirit, for they can discern between things which differ. But a minister who preaches as though he never wanted to bring children to Christ, and shoots right over the little one's heads, I do think Jesus is displeased with him.

Then there are others who doubt whether children ever will be converted. They do not look upon it as a thing likely to happen, and whenever they hear of a believing child, they hold up their hands at the prodigy, and say, "What a wonder of grace!" It ought to be, and in those Churches where the gospel is simply preached, it is as common a thing for children to be converted as for grown-up people to be brought to Christ. Others begin to doubt the truth of juvenile conversions. They say, "They are very young, can they understand the gospel. Is it not merely an infantile emotion, a mere profession?" My brethren, you have no more right to suspect the sincerity of the young, than to mistrust the grey-headed; you ought to receive them with the same open-breasted confidence with which you receive others when they profess to have found the Saviour. Do, I pray you, whenever you see the faintest desire in your children, go down on your knees, as your servant does, when the fire is almost out, and blow the spark with your own breath — seek by prayer to fan that spark to a flame. Do not despise any godly remark the child may make. Do not puff the child up on account of the goodness of the remark, lest you make him vain and so injure him, but do encourage him; let his first little prayers be noticed by you; though you may not like to teach him a form of prayer — I shall not care if you do not — yet teach him what prayer is; tell him to express his desires in his own words, and when he does so, join ye in it and plead with God on his behalf, that your little one may speedily find true peace in a Saviour's blood. You must not, unless you would displease my Master, keep back the smallest child that longs to come to Christ.

Here let us observe that the principle is of general application, you must not hinder any awakened soul from seeking the Saviour. O my brethren and sisters, I hope we have such a love for souls, such an instinct within us to desire to see the travail of Christ's soul, that instead of putting stumbling-blocks in the way, we would do the best we could to gather out the stones. On Sabbath days I have laboured to clear up the doubts and fears which afflict coming sinners; I have entreated God the Holy Spirit to enable me so to speak, that those things which hindered you from coming to the Saviour might be removed; but how sad must be the case of those who delight themselves in putting stumbling-blocks in men's way. The doctrine of election for instance, a great and glorious truth, full of comfort to God's people; how often is that made to frighten sinners from Jesus! There is a way of preaching that with a drawn sword, and say, "You must not come unless you know you are one of God's elect." That is not the way to preach the doctrine. The true way of preaching it is, "God has a chosen people, and I hope you are one of them; come, lay hold on Jesus, put your trust in him." Then there be others who preach up frames and feelings as a preparation for Christ. They do in effect say, "Unless you have felt so much depression of spirit, or experienced a certain quantity of brokenness of heart, you must not come to Christ," instead of declaring, that whosoever will is permitted to come, and that the true way of coming to Christ is not with a qualification of frames and feeling and mental depressions, but just as you are. Oh! it is my soul's delight to preach a gospel which has an open door to it, to preach a mercy-seat which has no veil before it; the veil is rent in twain, and now the biggest sinner out of hell who desires to come, is welcome. You who are eighty years of age, and have hated Christ all the time, if now the Spirit of God makes you willing to come, Christ seems to say, "Suffer the grey-headed to come unto me, and forbid them not:" while to you little children, he stretches out his arms in the same manner, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." O my beloved, see to it that your heart longs to come to Christ, and not to ceremonies! I stand here this day to cry, "Come ye to the cross, not to the font." When I forget to lift up the Lord Jesus, and to cast down the forms of man's devising, "let my right hand forget her cunning," and "let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth" —

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good;"

The font is a mockery and an imposition if it be put before Christ. If you have baptism after you have come to Christ, well and good, but to point you to it either as being Christ, or as being inevitably connected with Christ, or as being the place to find Christ, is nothing better than to go back to the beggarly elements of the old Romish harlot, instead of standing in the “liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,” and bidding the sinner to come as a sinner to Christ Jesus, and to Christ Jesus alone.

III. In the third and last place, let us also gather from our text, that **WHEN WE DISCOURAGE ANY, WE ALWAYS GO UPON WRONG GROUNDS.** Here was the case of children. I suppose that the grounds upon which the apostles kept back the children would be one of these — either that the children could not receive a blessing, or else that they could not receive it worthily.

Did they imagine that these little children could not receive the blessing? Perhaps so, for they thought them too young. Now, brethren, that was a wrong ground to go upon, for these children could receive the blessing and they did receive it, for Jesus took them in his arms and blessed them. If I keep back a child from coming to Christ on the ground that he is too young, I do it in the face of facts; because there have been children brought to Christ at an extremely early period. You who are acquainted with Janeway’s “Tokens for Children,” have noticed very many beautiful instance of early conversion. Our dear friend, Mrs. Rogers, in that book of hers, “The Folded Lamb,” gave a very sweet picture of a little son of hers, soon folded in the Saviour’s bosom above, who, as early as two or three years of age, rejoiced and knew the Saviour. I do not doubt at all, I cannot doubt it, because one has seen such cases, that children of two or three years of age may have precocity of knowledge, and of grace; a forwardness which in almost every case has betokened early death, but which has been perfectly marvellous to those who have talked with them. The fact is that we do not all at the same age arrive at that degree of mental stature which is necessary for understanding the things of God. Children have been reported as reading Latin, Greek, and other languages, at five or six years of age. I do not know that such early scholarship is any great blessing, it is better not to reach that point so soon; but some children are all that their minds ever will be at three or four, and then they go home to heaven; and so long as the mind has been brought up to such a condition that it is

capable of understanding, it is also capable of faith, if the Holy Spirit shall implant it. To suppose that he ever did give faith to an unconscious babe is ridiculous; that there can be any faith in a child that knows nothing whatever I must always take ground to doubt, for “How shall they believe without a preacher?” And yet they are brought up to make a profession in their long-clothes, when they have never heard a sermon in their lives. But those dear children to whom I have before referred, have understood the preacher, have understood the truth, have rejoiced in the truth, and their first young lisplings have been as full of grace as those glorious expressions of aged saints in their triumphant departures. Children are capable, then, of receiving the grace of God. Do mark by the way, that all those champions who have come out against me so valiantly, have made a mistake; they have said that we deny that little infants may be regenerated; we do not deny that God can regenerate them if he pleases; we do not know anything about what may or may not happen to unconscious babes; but we did say that little children were not regenerated by their godparents telling lies at a font — we did say that, and we say it again, that little children are not regenerated, nor made members of Christ, nor children of God, nor inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, by solemn mockery, in which godfathers and godmother s promise to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, much less for their children. That is the point; and if they will please to meet it, we will answer them again, but till such time as that, we shall probably let them talk on till God give s them grace to know better.

The other ground upon which the apostles put back the children would be, that although the children might receive the blessing, *they might not be able to receive it worthily*. The Lord Jesus in effect assures them t hat so far from the way in which a little child enters into the kingdom of heaven being exceptional, it is the rule; and the very way in which a child enters the kingdom, is the way in which everybody must enter it. How does a child enter the kingdom of heaven? Why, its faith is very simple; it does not understand mysteries and controversies, but it believes what it is told upon the authority of God’s Word, and it comes to God’s Word without previous prejudice. It has its natural sinfulness, but grace overcomes it, and the child receives the Word as it finds it. You will notice in boyish and girlish conversions, a peculiar simplicity of belief: they believe just what Christ says, exactly what he says. If they pray, they believe Christ will

hear them: if they talk about Jesus, it is as of a person near at hand. They do not, as we do, get into the making of these things into mysteries and shadows, but little children have a realizing power. Then they have great rejoicing. The most cheerful Christians we have are young believers; and the most cheerful old Christians are those who were converted when they were young. Why, see the joy of a child that finds a Saviour! "Mother," he says, "I have sought Jesus Christ, and I have trusted him, and I am saved." He does not say, "I hope," and "I trust," but "I am;" and then he is ready to leap for joy because he is saved. Of the many boys and girls whom we have received into Church-fellowship, I can say of them all, they have all gladdened my heart, and I have never received any with greater confidence than I have these: this I have noticed about them, they have greater joy and rejoicing than any others; and I take it, it is because they do not ask so many questions as others do, but take Jesus Christ's word as they find it, and believe in it. Well now, just the very way in which a child receives Christ, is the way in which you must receive Christ if you would be saved. You who know so much that you know *too* much; you who have big brains; you who are always thinking, and have tendency to criticism, and perhaps to scepticism, you must come and receive the gospel as a little child. You will never get a hold of my Lord and Master while you are wearing that quizzing cap; no, you must take it off, and by the power of the Holy Spirit you must come trusting Jesus, simply trusting him, for this is the right way to receive the kingdom.

But here, let me say, the principle which holds good in little children holds good in all other cases as well. Take for instance the case of very great sinners, men who have been gross offenders against the laws of their country. Some would say they cannot be saved; they can be for some of them have been. Others would say they never receive the truth as it is in Jesus in the right manner; ay, but they do. How do great sinners receive Christ? There are some here who have been reclaimed from drunkenness, and I know not what. My brethren, how did you receive Christ? Why in this way. You said, "All unholy, all unclean, I am nothing else but sin; but if I am saved, it will be grace, grace, grace." Why, when you and I stood up, black, and foul, and filthy, and yet dared to believe in Christ, we said, "If we are saved, we shall be prodigies of divine mercy, and we will sing of his love for ever." Well but, my dear friends, you must all receive Jesus Christ in that very way. That which would raise an objection to the

salvation of the big sinner is thrown back upon you, for Christ might well say, "Except ye receive these things as the chief of sinners, ye cannot enter the kingdom." I will prove my point by the instance of the apostle Paul. He has been held by some to be an exception to the rule, but Paul did not think so, for he says that God in him showed forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them that believe, and made him as it were a type of all conversions; so that instead of being an exception his was to be the rule. You see what I am driving at. The case of the children looks exceptional, but it is not; it has, on the contrary, all the features about it which must be found in every true conversion. It is of such that the kingdom of heaven is composed, and if we are not such we cannot enter it. Let this induce all of us who love the Lord, to pray for the conversion both of children and of all sorts of men. Let our compassion expand, let us shut out none from the plea of our heart; in prayer and in faith let us bring all who come under our range, hoping and believing that some of them will be found in the election of grace, that some of them will be washed in the Saviour's blood, and that some of them will shine as stars in the firmament of God for ever. Let us, on no consideration, believe that the salvation of any man or child is beyond the range of possibility, for the Lord saveth whom he wills. Let no difficulties which seem to surround the case hinder our efforts; let us, on the contrary, push with greater eagerness forward, believing that where there seems to be some special difficulty, there will be manifested, as in the children's case, some special privilege. O labour for souls, my dear friends! I beseech you live to win souls. This is the best rampart against error, a rampart built of living stones — converted men and women. This is the way to push back the advances of Popery, by imploring the Lord to work conversions. I do not think that mere controversial preaching will do much, though it must be used; it is grace-work we want; it is bringing you to Christ, it is getting you to lay hold of him — it is this which shall put the devil to a nonplus and expand the kingdom of Christ. O that my God would bring some of you to Jesus! If he is displeased with those who would keep you back, then see how willing he is to receive you. Is there in your soul any desire towards him? Come and welcome, sinner, come. Do you feel now that you must have Christ or die? Come and have him, he is to be had for the asking. Has the Lord taught you your need of Jesus? Ye thirsty ones, come and drink; ye hungry ones, come and eat. Yea, this is the proclamation of the gospel to-day, "The Spirit and the bride say,

Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” I do trust there may be encouragement in this to some of you. I pray my Master make you feel it. If he be angry with those who keep you back, then he must be willing to receive you, glad to receive you; and if you come to him he will in nowise cast you out. May the Lord add his blessing on these words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

PREPARATION FOR REVIVAL

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday October 30th, 1864 by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

— Amos 3:3

The *believer is agreed with God*. The war between the most holy God and his offending creatures is over in the case of bloodwashed sinners; not suspended by a truce, but ended for ever by a peace which passeth all understanding. The believer is fully agreed with God *concerning the divine law*: he confesses that “the law is holy, and just, and good”: he would not have it altered if he could. He rejoices in the way of God’s testimonies more than in all riches; yea, in his precepts doth he take delight, praying evermore, “O let me not wander from thy commandments.” He joyfully acknowledges that the Judge of all the earth rules mankind by a law in which there is no injustice, by statutes which subserve the best interests of the governed, while they secure the glory of the great Governor. The Christian “consents unto the law that it is good.” He is agreed with God, moreover, that a breach of the law should be visited with *penalty*: he would be unwilling that sin should go unpunished. He feels that the sanctions of law, however terrible, are absolutely necessary, and require to be severe. Above all, he is agreed with God in that great *atonement for sin* which God himself has ordained and provided in the person of Jesus Christ. Gazing upon the matchless sacrifice of Calvary, while the Lord is content, the believer is satisfied; where God finds

satisfaction for his injured honour, the believer finds the noblest object of admiration and adoration. Thou lovest Golgotha, O thou Judge of the earth; and thy people are perfectly agreed with thee in this. Henceforth the Christian is at one with God in his *love of holiness*: he delights in the law of God after the inward man. Sin, which is abhorrent to the Most High, is obnoxious to the Christian in that measure in which he is enlightened and conformed unto the image of Christ. Great God, thou hast unsheathed thy sword, and bathed it in heaven, for the destruction of all evil, and thy redeemed are on thy side, abhorring that which is evil, and resolving to fight under thy command till the last sin shall be cut off. Thou hast uplifted thy banner because of the truth, and around thy standard the soldiers of the cross are rallying; for thy battle, O Most High, is the battle of the Church; thy foes are our foes, and thy friends are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight.

I trust that most of us who are here met in the name of Jesus, feel a deep, sincere, and constant agreement with God. We have been guilty of murmuring at his will; but yet our newborn nature evermore at its core and center knoweth that the will of the Lord is wise and good; and we therefore bow our heads with reverent agreement, and say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." "The will of the Lord be done." Our soul, when through infirmity she is tempted to rebellion, nevertheless struggles after complete resignation of her wishes and desires to the will of the Most High. We do not covet the life of self-will, but we sigh after the spirit of self-denial; yea, of self-annihilation, that Christ may live in us, and that the old *Ego*, the carnal *I*, may be altogether slain. I would be as obedient to my God as are those firstborn sons of light, his messengers of flaming fire. As the mercury feels the mysterious changes of the air, and sensitively moves in accordance with the atmosphere, so would I being surrounded by my God, evermore perceive his wish and will, and move at once in obedience thereto. Our strength shall be perfect when we have no independent will, but move and act only as we are moved and acted on by our gracious God. I hope that at this hour we can truly say, that notwithstanding our many sins, we do love the Lord our God; and if we could have our will this morning, we would follow his commands without the slightest departure from the narrow path. We are in heart agreed with God.

The text reminds us that *this agreement gives us power to walk with God*. May we be enabled to claim this privilege which divine grace has bestowed on us: power to walk with God in daily, habitual, friendly, intimate, joyous *communion*. Believer, you can walk with God this very day. He is as near to thee as he was to Abraham beneath the oak at Mamre, or Moses at the back of the desert. He is as willing to show thee his love as he was to reveal himself to Daniel on the banks of Ulai, or to Ezekiel by the streams of Chebar. Thou hast no greater distance this day between thee and thy God, than Jacob had when he laid hold upon the angel and prevailed. He is *thy* father, as truly as he was the father of the people whom he covered by day with a cloud, and cheered by night with a pillar of fire; and though no Shekinah lights up a golden mercy-seat, yet the throne of grace is quite as glorious and even more accessible than in the days of old. He shall hide thee in his pavilion, as he did his servant David; yea, in the secret of the tabernacle shall be thy hiding-place. Enoch's privilege was not peculiar to him; it is *thy* birthright: claim it. Noah's high honour of walking with God was not reserved for him alone; it belongs to thee also, shut in as thou art in the ark of the covenant, and saved from the deluge of divine wrath. It should be the Christian's delight to be always with his God; walking with him in unbroken fellowship. Enoch did not take a turn or two with God, as Matthew Henry observes, but he walked with him four hundred years. O that we might cease to be with our God as wayfaring men who tarry but for a night: may we *dwell* in God, and may he dwell in us. Walking implies *action*; and our actions should always be in the Lord. The Christian, whatsoever he eateth, or drinketh, or doeth, should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him. Walking has in it the thought of *progress*; but all our progress should be with God. As we are rooted and grounded in Christ, so we must ask to grow up in him; ever abiding in our highest moments with God, and never imagining or conceiving any progress which shall remove us from humble confidence in him. Beloved brother in the Lord, it may be that thy heart is agreed with God, and yet thou hast lost for a time thy walking with him; be not at ease in thy soul till thou hast regained it. Search thine own heart by the light of the Word and of the Holy Spirit; and when thou knowest thyself to be agreed with God, through Him who is our peace, hesitate not to draw near with holy confidence to thy Father

and thy God, notwithstanding all thy past wanderings; for he welcomes thee to walk with him, seeing that thou art agreed.

At this season we, as a Church, have had our hearts set upon a revival of religion in our midst. Many of us will be greatly and grievously disappointed if such a revival shall not take place. We have felt moved to cry for it; I think I may say we have been almost unanimously thus moved. Already there are signs that God is visiting us in a very remarkable manner, but our souls are set upon a greater work than we have ever seen. Now, dear friends, we *need* as the first and most essential thing in this matter, *that God should walk with us*. In vain we shall struggle after revival unless we have his presence. If, then, we desire to have his presence with us, we must see to it that we are perfectly agreed with him both in the *design* of the work, and in the *method* of it; and I desire this morning to stir up your pure minds to heart-searching and vigilant self-examination, that every false way may be purged from us, since God will not walk with us as a Church, unless we be agreed with him.

The first remark, then, of this morning, is simply this, — *we desire in this matter to walk together with God*; but, in the second place, *if we would have him with us we must be agreed with him*; and therefore, thirdly, *we desire to purge ourselves of everything which would mar our perfect agreement with God, and so prevent his coming to our aid*. I do ask the prayers of God's people that he may enable me to speak to profit this morning, for if ever I felt my own unfitness to edify the saints, I do so just now: I will even confess that if I could have had my own choice, I should have left it to some one else to address you this morning. My harp is out of tune, and the strings are all loosened, but the chief musician understands his instruments, and knows how to get music out of us, and in answer to prayer he will doubtless sustain us and give you a blessing.

I. Let us, first, AVOW OUR DESIRE THAT IN OUR PRESENT EFFORT WE MAY WALK WITH GOD; otherwise *our strivings after revival will be very wearisome*.

I know of nothing more saddening than to attend a prayer-meeting where the devotion is forced, and the fervour laborious; where brethren puff and strain like engines with a load behind them too heavy for them to drag. It is painful to detect an evident design to get up an excitement, and wind up

the people to the proper pitch; when the addresses are adapted to foster hotheadedness, and the prayers to beget superstition. God's true saints cannot but feel that to gain the graces of the Spirit by fleshly vehemence is sad work. They retire from such a meeting, and they say, "How different is this from occasions when God's Spirit has been really at work with us!" Then, like a ship with her sails filled with a fair wind, floating majestically along without tugging and straining, the Church, borne onward with the breath of the divine Spirit, with a full tide of heaven's grace, speeds on her glorious way. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," was the request of Moses; and I think we may rather deprecate than desire a revival if God's presence be not in it. Lord, let us stay as we are, crying and groaning to see better days, rather than permit us to be puffed up with the notion of revival without thine own power in it; let us have no special prayer-meetings merely for the sake of them; but let us, O let us receive special blessings as the result of prayer: if thou dost not intend to help us now let us weep in secret, but let us not rejoice in a mere name if the substance be lacking. During a course of meetings by which we desire to excite the hearts of believers to a deeper interest in spiritual things; if there be not a gracious power in them, you will soon perceive a dulness, a flagging, a heaviness, a weariness stealing over the assembly; the numbers will decline, the prayers will become less fervent, and the whole thing will degenerate into a hollow sham or a mournful monotony. To come up from the wilderness is hard climbing unless we lean on our beloved. O thou who art our beloved and adorable Lord, lest our souls grow weary in well-doing, and faint for heaviness, be pleased to let us enjoy communion with thyself.

Not only is there weariness in our own attempts, but *they always end in disappointment, unless God walketh with us*. Ye may pray, and pray, and pray, but there shall be no conversions, no sense of quickening, until the Spirit's working be distinctly recognized. The minister shall be just as much a preacher of the mere letter as ever he was; the Church officers shall be as formal and official as ever they were; the Church members shall be as inconsistent and as indifferent as they were wont to be; the congregation shall be as uninterested and as unmoved as they were in the worst times, except the Spirit of God work with us. In this thing we may quote the words of the psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of

sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." O friends, it is well to have a holy industry and a devout perseverance; it is well to strain every nerve, and put forth every effort; but all this must end in the most sorry, heart-sickening failure, unless the Lord rend the heavens and come down. I am telling you what you all do know, and what I trust you feel, but it is what we are constantly forgetting; for many are they that go a warfare at their own charges, and so become both bankrupt and defeated; and many be they who would build God's house simply by stress of human effort, but they fail, because God is not there to give them success.

Yet more; supposing that in this our attempt at revival, we should not be favoured with the presence of God; then *prayer will be greatly dishonoured*. I take it, that when a Church draws near to God in special prayer, asking any mercy, if she does not receive that mercy on account of some disagreement with God, then her belief in prayer is, for the future, greatly weakened; and this is a most serious evil, for it loosens the girdle of the loins of God's saints. Anything which makes men doubt the efficacy of prayer, is an injury to their spirituality; and thus upon the largest scale God's Church will suffer loss if her prayers shall remain unanswered. We *must* go on; it would be ruin to forbear or to turn our backs. As a Church, we must now conquer or die. How can I again stir you up to supplication, if on this occasion your prayers should be in vain? I shall come into this pulpit with but a faint heart to speak of my Master's faithfulness if he does not give you evidences of it. Ah! my brethren, when you are lifting up your voices in intercession, I cannot expect to mark your earnestness nor to behold your faith, unless that faith shall be confirmed just now by a shower divine mercy. To the world at large the non-hearing of prayer would be a ready argument, either against the existence of God, or else against the reality of his promise. I hope such a thing as this will not occur. "Aha! aha!" saith the enemy, "see what has come of it all! The people cried, but they cried in vain. They met in large numbers; they approached the mercy-seat with tears and groans, but no result has come of it; there have been no more conversions than before, and God's strength has not been put forth." Would you desire that such a calamity as this should occur. The true soldiers of the cross in our Israel would almost as soon lay down their necks, as that God's honour should thus be attained in the presence of his foes.

Moreover, every attempt at revival of religion which proves a failure, — and fail it must without the presence of God, — *leaves the Church in a worse condition than it was before*; because, if it should prove a failure, from the want of any stir at all; then God's people fall back into their former lethargy, with an excuse for continuing in it; or if a false stir be made, a reaction follows of a most injurious character. I suppose the worst time in the Christian Church is generally that which follows the excitement of a revival; and if that revival has had no reality in it, the mischief which is done is awful and incalculable. If no excitement shall come at all, the mischief is still as great; God's people, being disappointed, have little heart to listen to further exhortations to future zealous action, become contented with their Laodicean lukewarmness, and it becomes impossible to bestir them again. If a revival should apparently have success and yet God be not in it, perhaps this is even worse. The wild-fire and madness of some revivals have been a perfect disgrace to the common sense of the age, let alone the spirituality of the Church. I know, and speak not without book, when I declare that some churches have been seriously deteriorated and permanently injured by large admissions of excited but unconverted persons; so that the only thing a fresh pastor could do was to begin afresh, and purge the church book throughout, sweeping off scores of carnal persons; the beginning anew being almost hopeless, because, after the paroxysm of passion about religion has passed, there follows a season in which religion is treated with indifference, if not with disdain. I had rather see a Church asleep, than see it awake into the fever of fanaticism: better that she should lie still than do mischief. O dear friends, we have felt in our souls, not that we *may* have revival, but that we *must* have it; and when we think of the incalculable damage that shall be done to us all if the Lord does not visit us, I am sure we must again draw near to the angel and wrestle afresh, with this determination, that we will not let him go unless he bless us.

We may be confirmed in our anxious desire to have the Lord walking with us in this thing, when we consider *the blessings which are sure to flow from his presence*. Ah! what holy quickening shall come upon every one of us. The preacher will not have to lament that he has so little power in prayer; both alone and in your presence he shall be strengthened to intercede as an angel of God. You shall not have to mourn that the service lacks its former sweetness. You will feel the blessedness you knew when

first you saw the Lord. You will not have to mourn that you are cold and dead, that your songs languish, and that your prayers expire; instead thereof, every action shall be fraught with vigour, every thought shall glow with earnestness, every word shall be clothed with divine power. Let God arise; and doubts and fears shall betake themselves to their hiding-places, as the bats conceal themselves at the rising of the dawn. Let the Lord visit you; and difficulties which frown like Alps, will sink to plains. Let him arise; and all your enemies shall flee before you, as the smoke before the wind; the heavens shall drop with showers of mercy; and even your sins and all the guilt thereof, shall shake as Sinai shook at the presence of the God of Israel. A Church with God's presence in it is holy, happy, united, earnest, laborious, successful; fair as the moon before the Lord, and clear as the sun in the eyes of men, she is terrible as an army with banners to her enemies.

If God shall be pleased to be with his Church, then direct good shall visit our congregation. We used to say at Park Street, that there were not many seat-holders unconverted. The like is to a great extent true here. The immense increase of our Church gives us the hope that the day will come when there will not be a single seat unoccupied by a believer: but it is not the case yet. I suppose the Church is about half the congregation now. There are some, however, that from the very first have listened; but so far as salvation is concerned, they have listened in vain: they have been moved to tears, they have made good resolutions; but after ten or eleven years of ministry, they are just where they were, except that they have accumulated fresh guilt. Some desire to be Christians, but they harbour some darling lust. We know some who *used* to feel under the Word, but do not feel now. The voice which once was like a trumpet, now lulls them to sleep. Some have made a compromise; and one day they will serve God and another day they will serve their sins; like the Samaritans who feared the Lord and served other gods. Now let our cries be heard for the Master's presence, and we shall soon see these brought in; hearts of stone shall be turned to flesh; the iron of the Word shall break the northern iron and steel; Jehovah Jesus shall ride victoriously through those gates which have been barred against him, and there shall be shouting in heaven because the Lord hath gotten him the victory.

Wider blessings will follow. A Church is never blessed *alone*. If any one Church shall stand in the vigour of piety, other Churches shall take example therefrom, and make an advance towards a better state. Here we have around us many Churches, hills which God has blessed; but they, like ourselves, have a tendency to slumber. Let God pour out his Spirit *here*, and the shower will not be confined to these fields, but will drop upon other pastures, and they shall rejoice on every side. Our testimony for God rings through this land; from one end of it to the other. Our ministry is not hidden under a bushel nor confined to a few. Tens of thousands listen every week to our word; and if the Lord shall be pleased to bless it, then shall it be as ointment poured forth, to load the moral atmosphere with a savour of Christ crucified. One nation cannot feel the power of God without communicating some of its blessing to another. The Atlantic cannot divide: no tongue or language can separate us. If God bless France or Switzerland, the influence shall be felt upon the Continent; if he should bless our island, all the whole earth must feel the power thereof. Therefore do we feel encouraged mightily to pray. O, my brethren, the world grows old; man's faith is getting weary of long waiting; the false prophets begin again to appear, and cry lo here, and lo there; but the Lord *must come*; of this are we confident: in such an hour as we think not, he may appear. How would we have him find us at his coming? Would we have him find his servants sleeping? his stewards wasting his goods? his vinedressers with neglected vines? his soldiers with swords rusted into their scabbards? No, we would have him find us watching, standing upon the watch-tower, feeding his sheep, tending his lambs, succouring the needy, comforting the weary, helping the oppressed. Gird up your loins then, I pray you, as men that watch for their Lord. If my words could have the power in them which I feel they lack, I would stir you up, dear brethren and sisters, to seek unto the mighty God of Jacob, that when the Son of Man cometh, if he find no faith upon the earth elsewhere, at least he may find it in *you*: if zeal shall be extinct in every other place, at least may he find one live coal yet glowing in your bosom. For this we want his presence, for without it we can do nothing.

II. This brings me, in the second place, to observe, that IF WE WOULD HAVE THE PRESENCE OF GOD, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE SHOULD BE AGREED WITH HIM.

We must be agreed with God *as to the end of our Christian existence*. God hath formed us for himself, that we may show forth his praise. The main end of a Christian man is, that having been bought with precious blood, he may live unto Christ, and not unto himself. O brethren! I am afraid we are not agreed with God in this. I must say it, painful though it be, there are many professors, and there are some in this Church, who at least appear to believe that the main end of their Christian existence is to get to heaven, to get as much money as they can on earth, and to leave as much as they can to their children when they die; I say, “to get to heaven,” for they selfishly include *that* as one of the designs of divine grace; but I question, if it were not for their happiness to go to heaven, whether they would care much about going, if it were only for God’s glory; for their way of living upon earth is always thus: “What shall I eat? what shall I drink? wherewithal shall I be clothed?” Religion never calls out their thoughtfulness. They can judge, and weigh, and plot, and plan to get money, but they have no plans as to how they can serve God. The cause of God is scarcely in their thoughts. They will pinch and screw to see how little they can contribute in any way to the maintenance of the cause of truth, or to the spread of the Redeemer’s kingdom; they will so far condescend to consider religion, as to think how they can profess it in the most economical manner, but nothing more. You will not hear me speak so foolishly and madly, as if I thought that it were not just and laudable in a man to seek to make money to supply the wants of his family, or even to provide for them on his own decease; such a thing is just and right: but whenever this gets to be the main thought; and I am persuaded it is the leading thought of too many professors, such men forget whose they are, and whom they serve; they are living to themselves; they have forgotten who it is that has said, “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold.” Oh! I pray God that I may feel *that I am God’s man*, that I have not a hair on my head which is not consecrated, nor a drop of my blood which is not dedicated to his cause; and I pray, brethren and sisters, that you may feel the same; that selfishness may clean die out of you; that you may be able

to say without any straining of the truth, "I have nothing to care for, nor to live for in this world, but that I may glorify God, and spread forth the savour of my Saviour's name." We cannot expect the Master's blessing till we are agreed about this. This is God's will: is it our will to-day? I know I have around me many faithful hearts, who will say, "My desire is, that whether I live or die, *Christ* may be glorified in me": if we be all of that mind, God will walk with us; but every one who is of another mind, and of a divided heart, is a hindrance and an injury to us in our progress. It would be no loss to lose such persons, but a spiritual benefit to the entire cause, if this dead lumber were cast out. When the body gets a piece of rotten bone into it, it never rests, till, with pain, it casts out the dead thing; and so with the Church; the Church may be increased by dead members, but when she begins to get vigorous and full of life, her first effort is with much pain, perhaps with much marring of her present beauty, to cause the dead substance to come forth; and if this should be the case, though we shall pity those who are cast forth, yet for our own health's sake, we may thank God and take courage.

If we would have God with us we must be agreed *as to the real desirableness and necessity of the conversion of souls*. God thinks souls to be very precious, and his own words are, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." Are we agreed with God in that? Our God thinks souls to be so precious, that if a man could gain the whole world and lose his soul, he would be a loser. Are we agreed with him there? In the person of Christ, our God wept over Jerusalem; watered with tears that city which must be given up to the flames. Have we tears, too? have we compassion, too? When God thinks of sinners it is in this wise: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" Can we bemoan sinners in that way? Do we stir our souls to an agony of grief because men will turn from God and will wilfully perish in their sin? If, on the contrary, you and I selfishly say, "We are safe, it does not matter to us whether others are brought to know Christ," *we are not agreed*, God will not work with us; and such of you as feel this indifferentism, this cursed lethargy, are our bane, our burden, our hindrance. God forgive you, and stir you up to feel that your heart will not rest unless poor sinners are plucked as brands from the burning. Are we agreed here?

If we would have the Lord with us, in the next place, we must be agreed *as to the means to be used in revival*. We are agreed that the *first* means is the preaching of Christ. We do not want any other doctrine than that we have received — Christ lifted up upon his cross, as the serpent was lifted up upon the pole. This is the remedy which *we*, in this house of prayer, believe in. Let others choose sweet music, or pictures, or vestments, or baptismal water, or confirmation, or human rites; we abhor them, and pour contempt upon them; as for us, our only hope lies in the doctrine of a substitute for sinners, the great fact of the atonement, the glorious truth that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save sinners. I think we are agreed with God in this, that the preaching of Christ is the way by which believers shall be saved. God's great agency is the Holy Spirit. We are agreed, brethren, that we do not want sinners to be converted by our persuasion, we do not want them brought into the Church by excitement; we want the Spirit's work, and the Spirit's work alone. I would not bend my knee *once* in prayer, much less day by day, to win a mere excitement; we *have* done without it, and we shall do without it by the grace of God; but I would give mine eyes, if I might but know that the Holy Spirit himself would come forth, and show what divinity can do in turning hearts of stone to flesh. In this thing, I think, that we are agreed with God. But God's way of blessing the Church is by the instrumentality of *all* her members. The multitude must be fed, but it must not be by Christ's hand alone, "He gave the bread to the disciples, and the disciples, to the multitude." Are you all agreed here? I am afraid not. Many of you are engaged in works of usefulness, and I will make this my boast this day, that I had never thought that I should meet with a people so apostolic in their zeal as the most of you have been. I have marvelled, and my heart has rejoiced when I have seen what self-sacrifice some of the poorest among you have made for Christ; what zeal, what enthusiasm you have manifested in the spreading abroad of the Saviour's name. But still there are some of you who are doing nothing whatever, you have a name to live, but I fear that you are dead; you are very seldom at a prayer-meeting — even some Church members and persons whom I know are not kept at home by business, but by sheer indifference to the cause of God. Some of you are never provoked to zeal and to good works. That you come and listen to us, is something; and for what you do we are grateful; but for what you do not do, over this we mourn, because we fear that we are

restrained in our efforts for the spread of the Saviour's kingdom, because as a Church we are not agreed in God's plan; and we *shall be* restrained until every man in the Church can say, "I will consecrate myself this day unto the Lord of hosts; if there is anything to be done, be it to be a door-keeper in the house of God, here am I.

"There's not a lamb among his flock,
I would disdain to feed;
There's not a foe before whose face
I'd fear his cause to plead."

Yet again, dear friends, are we agreed this day *as to our utter helplessness in this work*? I caught a good sentence the other day. Speaking with a Wesleyan minister, I said to him, "Your denomination during the past year did not increase: you have usually had a large increase to your numbers. You were never so rich as now; your ministers were never so well educated; you never had such good chapels as now, and yet you never had so little success. What are you doing? — knowing this to be the fact, what are you doing? How are the minds of your brethren exercised with regard to this?" He comforted me much by the reply. He said, "It has driven us to our knees: we thank God that we know our state and are not content with it. We have had a day of humiliation, and I hope," he said, "some of us have gone low enough to be blessed." There is a great truth in that last sentence, "low enough to be blessed," I do fear me that some of us never do go low enough to be blessed. When a man says, "Oh! yes, we are getting on very well, we do not want any revival that I know of," I fear me he is not low enough to be blessed; and when you and I pray to God with pride in us, with self-exaltation, with a confidence in our own zeal, or even in the prevalence of our own prayers of themselves, we have not come low enough to be blessed. An *humble* Church will be a *blessed* Church; a Church that is willing to confess its own errors and failures, and to lie at the foot of Christ's cross, is in a position to be favoured of the Lord. I hope we are agreed, then, with God, as to our utter unworthiness and helplessness, so that we look to him alone.

I charge you all to be agreed with God in this thing, that if any good shall be done, any conversions shall occur, *all the glory must be given to him*. Revivals have often been spoiled, either by persons boasting that such-and-such a *minister* was the means of them, or else, as in the case of

the North of Ireland, by boasting that the work was done *without* ministers. That revival, mark you, was stopped in its very midst and seriously damaged by being made a kind of curiosity, and a thing to be gazed at and to be wondered at by persons both at home and abroad. God does not care to work for the honour of men, either of ministers or of laymen, or of Churches either; and if we should say, "Ah! well, I should like to see the presence of God with us that we may have many conversions, and put it in the Magazine, and say, that is how things are done at the Tabernacle," why we should not have a blessing that way. Crowns! crowns! crowns! but all for thy head Jesu! laurels and wreaths! but none for man, all for him whose own right hand and whose holy arm hath gotten him the victory. We must all be agreed on this point, and I hope we are.

3. And now to conclude. LET US PUT AWAY ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH OFFEND OUR GOD.

Before God appeared upon Mount Sinai, the children of Israel had to cleanse themselves for three days. Before Israel could take possession of the promised rest of Canaan, Joshua had to see to it that they were purified by the rite of circumcision. Whenever God would visit his people, he always demands of them some preparatory purging, that they may be fit to behold his presence; for two cannot walk together, unless that which would make them disagree be purged out. A few suggestions then, as to whether there is anything in us with which God cannot agree. Here I cannot preach to you indiscriminately, but put the task into the hand of each man to preach to himself. In the days of the great weeping, we read that every man wept apart and his wife apart, the son apart, and the daughter apart, all the families apart. So it must be here. Is there *pride* in me? Am I puffed up with my talent, my substance, my character, my success? Lord purge this out of me, or else thou canst not walk with me, for none shall ever say that God and the proud soul are friends: he giveth grace to the humble; as for the proud, he knoweth them afar off, and will not let them come near to him. Am I *slothful*? do I waste hours which I might usefully employ? Have I the levity of the butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, but drinks no honey from any of them? or have I the industry of the bee, which, wherever it lights, would find some sweet store for the hive? Lord, thou knowest my soul, thou understandest me. Am I

doing little where I might do much? Hast thou had but little reaping for much sowing? Have I hid my talent in a napkin? Have I spent that talent for myself, instead of spending it for thee? Slothful souls cannot walk with God. "My Father worketh," saith Jesus, "and I work"; and you who stand in the market-place idle, may stand there with the devil, but you cannot stand there with God. Let every brother who is guilty of this, purge away his sloth.

Or am I guilty of *worldliness*. This is the crying sin of many in the Christian Church. Do I put myself into association with men who cannot by any possibility profit me? Am I seen where my Master would not go? Do I love amusements which cannot afford me comfort when I reflect upon them; and which I would never indulge in, if I thought that Christ would come while I was at them? Am I worldly in spirit as to fashion? Am I as showy, as volatile, as frivolous as men and women of the world? If so, if I love the world, the love of the Father is not in me; consequently he cannot walk with me, for we are not agreed.

Again, am I *covetous*? do I scrape and grind? is my first thought, not how I can honour God, but how I can accumulate wealth? When I gain wealth, do I forget to make use of it as a steward? If so, then God is not agreed with me; I am a thief with his substance; I have set myself up for a master instead of being a servant, and God will not walk with me till I begin to feel that this is not my own, but his; and that I must use it in his fear.

Again, am I of an *angry* spirit? Am I harsh towards my brethren? Do I cherish envy towards those who are better than myself, or contempt towards those who are worse off? If so, God cannot walk with me, for he hates envy, and all contempt of the poor is abhorrent to him. Is there any *lust* in me? Do I indulge the flesh? Am I fond of carnal indulgences by which my soul suffers? If so, God will not walk with me; for chambering, and wantonness, and gluttony, and drunkenness, separate between a believer and his God: these things are not convenient to a Christian. Before the great feast of unleavened bread, a Jewish parent would sweep out every piece of leaven from his house; and so anxious would he be, and so anxious is the Jew at the present day, that he take a candle and sweeps out every cupboard, no matter though there may have been no food put in there at any time, he is afraid lest by accident a crumb may be somewhere concealed in the house; and so, from the garret to the cellar, he clears the

whole house through, to purge out the old leaven. Let us do so. I cannot think you will do so as the effect of such poor words as mine; but if my *soul* could speak to you, and God blessed the utterance, you would. For my own part, I cry unto my Master, that if there be anything that can make me more fit to be the messenger of God to you and to the sons of men, however painful might be the preparatory process, he would graciously be pleased not to spare me of it. If by sickness, if by serious calamities, if by slander and rebuke, more honour can be brought to him, then hail! and welcome! all these things; they shall be my joy; and to receive them shall be delight. I pray you, utter the same desire: "Lord, make me fit to be the means of glorifying thee."

"The dearest idol I have known,
 Whate'er that idol be;
 Help me to tear it from its throne,
 And worship only thee."

What! do you demur? Do you want for ever to go on in the old dead-and-alive way in which the Churches are just now? Do you feel no sacred passion stirring your breast to anguish for the present, and to hope for the *future*? O ye cravens, who dread the battle, slink to your beds; but ye who have your Master's spirit in you, and would long to see brighter and better days, lift up your heads with confidence in him who will walk with us if we be agreed.

My text has a main bearing upon the unconverted: I think of preaching from it this evening to those who are not agreed with God, and who cannot walk with him. I pray that they may be reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; and the most likely means to accomplish this, will be by your earnest and fervent prayers. O Lord, hear and answer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

GOOD EARNESTS OF GREAT SUCCESS

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-Day Evening, January 12th, 1868, by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

— Acts 6:7

Certain things preceded this prosperity — the counterpart of which I verily believe we have experienced among ourselves. There had been a little trouble in the church; some had thought one thing, some had thought another. There appeared to have been a just cause for complaint. The apostles, conciliatory in their temper, and earnest in their endeavour to keep the church together, as all true ministers should be, proposed the election of seven men who should distribute the contributions impartially among the poor. This was agreed to and acted upon by the entire assembly, and straightway the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul. Well might great grace rest upon them all, for they loved each other with a pure heart fervently. Such unanimity, as a rule, I consider essential to church prosperity. If there be divisions amongst you, and one shall say, “I am for this,” and another, “I am for that,” how can you expect that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of peace, should be present with you, and working among you? But when we are knit together in brotherly affection, the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. Where brotherly love continues, and saints walk in

holy unity, the witness they bear is powerful, and the increase they gather is palpable.

So I felt when I met with the brethren last Thursday night. The attendance at the church meeting was very numerous, and the unanimity that prevailed not only gratified me, but I must confess astounded me too. I think all of us who know anything of the history of churches, especially those of a democratic order, where we recognize the rights of every member, understand how easy it is for thoughts to diverge, for counsels to vary, and for excellent brethren conscientiously to disagree. A breach once made has a tendency to widen, and a rent, unless speedily repaired, may tear a church to pieces. But not so much as a single word was spoken, nor do I know that so much as a single thought crossed the breast of any one that evening, contrary to the general current of unanimous opinion with which you elected my brother to take upon himself the office proposed to assist me in my work. I felt as if I could only weep my joy. I knew of no words by which I could express it, because I looked not only at the unity itself, but regarding it as one of the qualifications for future prosperity, I thought within myself, "Surely God will bless us; surely he will bless us yet more abundantly than aforetime."

Moreover, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, you know that some two or three years ago, Baptist churches of London scarcely knew each other. There might have been some secret love between them, but certainly there was no manifest display of it. But now for two years we have been associated together to the number of eighty or ninety; in fact, there are now nearly a hundred of the churches among whom union has been cemented. We have been enabled to do some service for the Master by this incorporation, but whatever service we may have done or may not have done, this certainly has been the result of our meeting with each other, that the churches have come to feel themselves to be a whole, they keep rank, they walk together as a phalanx, desire to be faithful to Christ, and to bear each others' burdens. If anyone had told me, three or four years ago, that I should live to see, as I did last year, this house filled with the representatives of our Baptist churches met together to pray, I should have said, "If the Lord will open windows in heaven, may such a thing be!" But it has been, and by God's grace it will be yet again, and we shall clasp hands next Tuesday, and go on for another campaign against the

common enemy, united as one man, first to Christ, and then to one another. May we not look upon this as a sign that God is intending to bless all our churches, to pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive? The Lord send prosperity. Amen, say we, amen from our hearts. And amen we hope all God's saints will say. May the blessing speedily be sent. Since we have the first matter I am hopeful.

But many will urge discouragements. "How is it likely," says one, "that we can hope to make an impression upon the present age? What means have we but the simple gospel of Jesus Christ?" We are certainly not among the wealthy, and we count not amongst us the great ones of the land. Our membership has always been, and still is, among the poor. How shall we expect to tell upon so huge a city as this, or to exert any influence upon so great a country; and, above all, how shall we make any impress upon the population of the whole globe? My dear brethren, we are weak, but we are not weaker than the first disciples of Christ. Neither were they learned, nor were they the wealthy of the earth: fishermen, the most of them, by no means men of cultivated ability — their tramp was that of a legion that went forth to conquer as well as to fight. Wherever they went and wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, their enemies were put to confusion. It is true they died in the conflict. Some of them were slain by the sword, and others of them were rent in sunder by wild beasts; but in all these things they were more than conquerors through him that loved him. The primitive church did tell upon its age, and left a seed behind which the whole earth could not destroy; and so shall we by God's grace if we are equally set upon it, equally filled with the divine life, equally resolved by any means and by all means to spread abroad the savour of Jesus Christ's name: our weakness shall be our strength, for God shall make it to be the platform upon which the omnipotence of his grace shall be displayed. Keep together, brethren, keep close to Christ; close up your ranks. Heed the battle cry; hold fast the faith; quit yourselves like men in the conflict, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Only may the King himself lead us onward to the fray, and we shall not fear the result.

Having thus looked at the precedents of that prosperity enjoyed by the church at Jerusalem, we shall, this evening, with deep earnestness, ask your attention to the means by which a like prosperity may be procured

for such churches as do not enjoy it now; secondly, we shall have a word or two upon the results of such prosperity; and then, thirdly, upon the alternative which is before every church, either to obtain such prosperity or else to mourn over grievous evils.

I. WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS PROSPERITY MAY BE PROCURED?

If we want to see the Word of God increase, multitudes added to the disciples, and a great company of those who are least likely to be saved brought in, there must be an adequate instrumentality. Nothing can avail without the operation of the Holy Spirit and the smile from heaven. Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, and God giveth the increase. We must never begin our catalogue of outward means without referring to that blessed and mysterious potentate who abides in the church, and without whom nothing is good, nothing efficient, nothing successful.

“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
With all thy quickening powers.”

This should be our first prayer whenever we attempt to serve God, for if not, we begin with pride, and can little hope to succeed by prowess. If we go the warfare at our own charges we must not marvel if we return stained with defeat. O Spirit of the living God, if it were not for thy power we could not make the attempt, but when we rely upon thee we go forward in confidence.

As for the ostensible means, would any church prosper, there must be much plain preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have been struck lately in looking through the history of the Reformation, and of the times before the Reformation, with the remarkable downrightness of the testimony of the early preachers. If you look at the life of Farren you find him not preaching about the gospel, but preaching the gospel. So it was with John Calvin. He is looked upon now, of course, a theologian only, but he was really one of the greatest of gospel preachers. When Calvin opened the Book and took a text, you might be sure that he was about to preach “Through grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” And it was the same with Luther. Luther’s preaching was just the ringing of a big bell, the note of which was always, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live! It is not of works, lest any man should boast, but by

faith are ye saved, and by faith alone." They spake this, and they spake it again; neither did they couch the doctrine in difficult words, but they laboured with all their might, so to speak, that the ploughman at the plough-tail should understand, and that the fish-wife should comprehend the truth. They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence; of rhetoric they had a most contemptible opinion, but they just dashed right on with this one truth, "He that believeth hath everlasting life;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And, my brethren, if we are to see the church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, gospel-preaching. I do believe that the hiding of the cross beneath the veil of fine language and learned dissertation is half the cause of the spiritual destitution of our country. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. I would sooner say these few words and then cease my testimony, than utter the most splendid oration that ever streamed from the lips of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but not have declared the gospel of Christ. We must keep to this. This must be the hammer that we bring down upon the anvil of the human heart again, and again, and again. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord! God forbid that we should know anything among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified! Look to him — not to the priest, not to your good works, not to your prayers, not to your church-goings or your chapel-goings, but to Christ Jesus exalted. Look to him in faith, and God is willing to forgive you, able to forgive you, to receive you, to make you his children, and for ever to glorify you with himself. We must have much more of this plain preaching, and not only plain preaching but plain teaching. Sunday School teachers, you must teach this same gospel. I know you do, but full many Sunday School teachers do not. A certain denomination has made the confession that after having had their schoolrooms crowded with children, they do not know that any of those children have afterwards come to be attendants at the places of worship. Miserable confession! Miserable teachers must they be! And have we not known teachers who believed in the doctrines of grace, and upstairs in the chapel they would have fought earnestly for them, but downstairs in the schoolroom they have twaddled to the little children in this kind of way — "Be good boys and girls; keep the Sabbath; do not buy sweets on a Sunday; mind your fathers and your mothers; be good, and you will go to

heaven"! — which is not true, and is not the gospel; for the same gospel is for little children as for grown- up men — not "Do this and live," which is after the law that was given by Moses, but "Believe and live," which is according to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. Teachers must inculcate the gospel if they are to see the salvation of their classes, the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, for without this no great thing will be done.

And if we would see the gospel spread abroad in London as once it did in Geneva, as once, under John Knox, it did in Scotland, as it did in Luther's day throughout Germany, we must have much holy living to back it all up. After we have done the sermon, people say, "How about the people that attend there? What about the church members, are they upright? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands? Are they good servants? Are they kind masters?" People will be sure to enquire this, and if the report of our character be bad, it is all over with our testimony. The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being well-skilled in his art; and the preacher may preach, but if his people do not love the gospel, they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands. As I told you this morning, the followers of the early Reformers were distinguished by the sanctity of their lives. When they were about to hunt out the Waldenses, the French king, who had some of them in his dominions, sent a priest to see what they were like, and he, honest man as he was, came back to the king, and said, "As far as I could find, they seem to be much better Christians than we are. I am afraid they are heretics, but really they are so chaste, so honest, so upright, and so truly pious, that, though I hate heresy — I hope your majesty does not suspect me on that account — yet I would that all Catholics were as good as they are." Now, this was what made the gospel victorious in those days — the stern integrity of those who received it, and thus it will be still. It cannot be otherwise. But if you become worldly, if you members of this church are just the same as other men who have no grace and make no pretensions, what is the good of your profession? You are liars before God unless you live above the common life of the rest of mankind. Oh! to get back to the simplicity of Christian manners! I cannot go into particulars, and ordain that this you shall do and that you shall avoid, but you know very well what the simplicity is, and were it carried out there is a great deal that is

now practised amongst professors that would have at once to be given up. As the books were burned when Paul preached, so there would be a great deal to be burned in the Christian church if we had the Spirit of God in all his power to bring us back to the old simplicity of the Christian faith. And why not? If you put the sword into the scabbard, you cannot kill with it; you must pull it out, and let it glitter in all its naked sharpness. If you put the sword of the gospel into the scabbard of worldly conformity, as some of you do, you cannot expect that there will be any power in it. Draw it away from your worldly company, and your pernicious customs, and then shall you see that it still has power to kill and to make alive. There must, then, be holy living as well as plain testimony.

Yet all this would not suffice, if the church is to be multiplied and many are to be saved, unless we add individual, personal exertion. I am so full with one theme today, that if I plough in the same furrow this evening as I did this morning I cannot help it, for I am anxious to make that furrow very deep and broad. I believe that no Christian church can have prosperity if only a part of the members are active for the conversion of souls. Why, sirs, it had got to be a thought among Christians that we ministers were to do all the work of bringing souls to Christ, and that you were to sit still and enjoy the sermon, and perhaps criticise it and pull it to pieces. But this was not orthodox; according to Christ's law, every Christian is to be a minister in his own sphere; every member of the church is to be active in spreading the faith which was delivered not to the ministers, but delivered to the saints, to every one of them, that they might maintain it and spread it according to the gift which the Spirit has given them. Shall I venture a parable? A certain band of men, like knights, had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valour and of indomitable courage; they had carried everything before them, and subdued province after province for their king. But on a sudden they said in the council-chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down fifty of his adversaries; would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms, who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stop at home? We should be much more at our ease; our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armour be bruised in returning from the fray, and no doubt great things would be done." Now, the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they

fought well, no one could doubt it; to the best of their ability they unhorsed their foe and they did great exploits. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten; our ranks are broken; our pennons are trailed in the dust; what is the cause of it?" When out spoke the champion, and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some twelve or fifteen of us could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight, and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche, and crushed him beneath our tramp; but now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?" So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armour once again, and go to the battle, and so victory returned. I speak to you tonight, I, one of the rank of God's servants, and I say, my brethren, if we are to have the victory you must be every one of you in the fight. We must not spare a single one, neither man nor woman, old nor young, rich nor poor, but you must each fight for the Lord Jesus according to your ability, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done upon earth even as it is in heaven. We shall see great things when you all agree to this and put it in practice.

Combined with this there must be much earnest prayer. The prayer of faith! have we not held it in high esteem, have we not made some considerable proof of it in this place? We hope to have more faith — a great increase both of volume and power. Nothing is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome heaven by wrestling intercession. When we have seen one, two, or ten, or twenty penitents converted, and when we have sometimes been heartily thankful that a hundred have been added to this church in a month, ought we ever to have been satisfied? Should we not have felt that the prayer which was blessed to the conversion of a hundred, had it been more earnest, might, in the divine purpose, have been answered with the conversion of a thousand? Why not? I do not know why London should not be shaken from end to end with gospel truth before this day twelve months. You will say, "We have not enough ministers." But God can make them. I tell you, sirs, he can find ministers for his truth — ay, if he willed it, among the very offscourings of the earth. He can take the worst of men, the vilest of the vile, and change their hearts, and make them preach the truth if he pleases. We are not to look to what

we have. The witness of the senses only confuses those who would walk by faith. See what he did for the church in the case of Saul of Tarsus. He just went up to the devil's army, and took out a ringleader, and said to him, "Now, sir, you preach the gospel which once you despised." And who preached it better? Why, I should not wonder if ere long in answer to prayer we see the Ritualistic clergy preaching the gospel! Who can tell — the Romish priests may yet do it, and repeat the tale of Luther and Melancthon. Were not Luther, and Melancthon, and Calvin, and their comrades, brought out of Papal darkness to show light unto the people? We have heard with our ears, why may we not see with our eyes, the mighty works of God? The Lord can find his men where we know nothing about them. "Of these stones," said the Baptist, as he pointed to the banks of the Jordan, "Of these stones God can raise up children unto Abraham;" and as he could then, so he can now. Let us not despair. If we will but pray for it, our heavenly Father will deny his children nothing. Come, do but come, in simplicity of heart, and according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

Would you see the church greatly increase, and the kingdom come to the throne of the Son of David? then we must all get more intense glowing spiritual life. Do you understand me. There are two persons yonder. They are both alive, but one of them lies in bed. He wakes, but he says, with the sluggard —

"You have woke me too soon, I must slumber again,"

and when he gets up he gazes round with vacant wonder and strange bewilderment. He has no energy, he is listless, and we say of him, "What a lifeless creature he is!" "He is living, but with how little vitality! Now, you see another man. His sleep is short; he wakes soon; he is out to his business; takes down the shutters; he is standing behind the counter waiting upon this customer and that; he is all active; he is here, there, and everywhere, nothing is neglected; his eyes are wide open, his brain is active, his hands are busy, his limbs are all nimble. Well, what a different man that is! you are glad to get this second man to be your servant; he is worth ten times the wages of the first. There is life in them both, but what a difference there is between them! The one is eagerly living, the other is drawling out an insipid existence. And how many Christians there are of this sort! They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn

book, listen to the prayer without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go into business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men, no trying to talk to children, or servants, or friends, about Christ, no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity, no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians. Would it were not so. On the other hand, we see another kind of man — one that is renewed in the spirit of his mind; though he has to be in the world, his main thoughts are how he can use the world to promote the glory of Christ. If he goes into business, he wants to make money that he may have wherewith to give bountifully for the spread of the gospel. If he meets with friends, he tries to thrust a word in edgeways for his Master; and whenever he gets an opportunity, he will speak, or write, but he will be aiming to do something for him who has bought him with his precious blood. Why, I could pick out, if it were right to mention names, some here who are all alive, till their bodies seem to be scarcely strong enough for the real vitality and energy of their souls. Oh! these are the cream of the church, the pick and choice of the flock, the men who are true men, and the women who are the true daughters of Jerusalem. The Lord multiply the number of such; yea, may he make every one of us to be such, for I am afraid that we all of us need quickening. I know I do myself. It is a long time since I preached a sermon that I was satisfied with. I scarcely recollect ever having done so. You do not know, for you cannot hear my groanings when I go home, Sunday after Sunday, and wish that I could learn to preach somehow or other; wish that I could discover the way to touch your hearts and your consciences, for I seem to myself to be just like the fire when it wants stirring; the coals have got black when I want them to flame forth. If I could but say in the pulpit what I feel in my study, or if I could but get out of my mouth what I have tried to get into my own soul, then I should preach indeed, and move your souls, I think. Yet perhaps God will use our weakness, and we may use it with ourselves, to stir us up to greater strength. You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody; it might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you

might find it very difficult to stand in its way. It is the force that does the thing. So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God; it is the man, who, however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which heaven has given him, that will accomplish the work — the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives, with all the force of his nature for the glory of God. Put these three or four things together, and I think you have the means of prosperity.

II. Time flies, and therefore while I briefly hint, I must leave you largely to meditate, THE RESULTS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS PROSPERITY — Souls are saved.

John Owen said that if you had to preach to a whole nation for twelve months, in order to win one soul, it would be good wages, for a soul is so priceless, that to redeem it from going down to the pit would be worth the expenditure of all human strength. Richard Knill once said, that if there were only one unconverted person in the wilds of Siberia, and that God had ordained that every Christian in the world must go and talk to that one person before he would be converted, it would be an exceedingly little thing for us all to do, to go all the way there through the cold, and frost, and snow, to win that one soul. And he was right, and I may well stir you up to energy when the result will be the conversion of souls.

The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified. Who would not wish to live, or even to die, for this?

“Let him be crowned with majesty,
Who bowed his head in death,
And let his praise be sounded high,
By all things that have breath.”

If you have not forgotten what he suffered for you, dear friends, do you not wish to see him crowned with many crowns? He wore the crown of thorns for you, would not you wish to see the fruit of his soul's travail, the removal of the curse, the extension of his kingdom, the honour of his fame, the growing enthusiasm of his subjects — to make his excellency apparent, and his praise more and more famous to the very end of time? I know you would, and therefore I ask you to strive together with us in

your prayers and your efforts, that the number of his disciples may be multiplied greatly.

Moreover, the result will be to build up the church itself, for there is no good done in the name of Jesus which does not redound to the satisfaction of his bride. If you do good to another, you are taking the shortest way to do good to your own soul. As those who promote sanitary measures for the benefit of the neighbourhood are thereby favouring the conditions of their own health, so the promulgation of saving knowledge throughout the world is augmenting the peace and the welfare of our own hearts, and of all who are already saved. Truly, I believe, that some persons are never comfortable in religion, because they are selfish in it. If they began to live with some object, their constant distress of mind would soon be rolled away. May God, therefore, stir us up, that the whole church may thereby be blessed.

III. But I must now come to the point with which I proposed to finish, namely, THE ALTERNATIVE WHICH I THINK STANDS BEFORE THIS CHURCH AND EVERY OTHER CHURCH.

Either we must get a high state of prosperity, or else we shall lack what is to be dreaded to the very uttermost. How many churches there are which have proved the truth of what I am now going to say! They have not tried to increase; they have not cared about conversions, and very soon there has been murmuring. One did not like the minister; another did not like the deacons; a third objected to a brother that was introduced; and all this, perhaps, was quietly hushed up because they were too respectable to come to an open disturbance, but still there it was — the fire in the embers; and thus it kept on till, by-and-by, they come to one of two things, either lethargy or else division. They settled down as quiet and sober religious people. The minister was not excited; not he! The people could not be stirred. The boast was that there were so many carriages on a Sunday outside the chapel. Some trusted in chariots and some in horses, but there was nothing about conversion. Why, I know churches whose baptismal pool would have been green by now if the water had been standing in it, so few have there been added to their number. And yet they are not at all dissatisfied. “No,” the good deacon says, “you know our pew-rents keep up very well; we have not a seat to let in the gallery!” “Ah!” and says the minister, “And while we have the most respectable

people in the town come among us, we do not approve of these revivalists down the back street who are trying to catch those poor sinners; at least, if they want them, they may have them, for we do not want them.” That is the style in which some of these people talk. If they do not say it in words, they think it in their hearts. Well, and when a church does get into that dreadful state, it becomes noxious as a very dunghill. And when there is very little spiritual animation there soon comes to be the ferment of very great division. Somebody or other cannot bear this. Some young and fervent spirit speaks out about it, and the minister does not like it, the deacons do not like it, and they try to put him down. Then half-a-dozen more of the members think that he is right, and the life that is in the church wakes up. The trumpet is sounded, and there is a troop led off to establish a healthy organization somewhere else, and the old corpus is left to rot as it may, and to decay as many churches do. Now, were I a prophet, I might tell you what should come to pass in latter days; but speaking as a monitor, rather than as a seer, I should not wonder but I could almost tell what you will come to by-and-by. In my day may it never, never be. You will get to be very respectable over at the Tabernacle; after I die you will have an organ, I dare say, and you will get a fine parson to deliver the most polished discourses to you, and where you will then drift I can readily guess. The Lord have mercy upon you, and save you from it. This is the tendency, however, of every church, it matters not what it is. Where the most honest, simple, faithful preachers have been, the people have got to be too great for the gospel, and too proud to receive the truth in the love of it. May it never happen in our days, however, and if earnest prayer can prevent it, may it never happen so long as the world stands, but till Christ comes may you be an honest, truth-loving people, striving together for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and never departing from the earnest simplicity of the faith. But unless we keep up the earnest spirit amongst us, we shall very soon degenerate into the ordinary dead-alive Christianity, which is only half as good as nothing at all, because it gives men a name to live when they are dead.

The picture I have drawn may seem to you too highly-coloured, but I assure you that I have seen such things. I am not old, but I have lived long enough to see churches go in this way; ay, and churches too, that were once warm-hearted. I have seen young members who were once earnest grow cold. I have seen old members who were once content to worship

with the humble ones, get a little up in the world. Then “of course” they must go to church! I have seen congregations broken to pieces, and churches split up, and the bottom of it all has been because the vital godliness has been drained out of the system; the love of God has not remained in the heart, for when the rich man has the love of God in his heart, he delights to see the multitude gathered together; he is glad to do his part, and help in all he can. And the learned man, if the preaching does not always suit him, yet he is glad to think that the unlearned have a preacher whom they can understand. Whoever the man may be, or however great and famous, if he loves Christ he is satisfied with the simple truth. “Give me that,” says he, “and that is enough. I can get my fine thinking and my fine reading in the weekdays if I want it; but on the Sabbath let me hear of Jesus; let me hear the story of the cross; let me see sinners led to Calvary — it is all I want, and I am well content if I have this.”

Are there not many here tonight who are unconverted? They will wonder perhaps what I am making all this stir about. Let me address myself personally to you. O ye unconverted women, it is about you that we are concerned. And you, ye unconverted men, it is about you that we are anxious; we are seeking after you. Why, for our own sakes, if there were none to be saved, we might be content to hear far different doctrine from this. The doctrines of grace are sweet in our ears, and our souls would be well enough fed by them. But because we want to see you saved we have to talk with you, and attend to these practical matters since we want to see you brought to Christ. Now look at the text, and it may give you some comfort if you are willing to lay hold on Christ. Do you notice, it is said that “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”? Now, these priests were they that conspired to crucify Christ. They were once the bigoted enemies of the gospel, but they became obedient to the faith. Why should not you, then? I know the devil tells you that you have been too great a sinner. That cannot be. Perhaps he reminds you that you have been a scoffer, or have lived in immorality, or have been self-righteous, which is as heinous a sin as any other. Ah! well, but the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. A young woman wrote to me the other day — I do not know who she is, but she said, “I cannot tell anybody, but I have done so-and-so, a dreadful sin indeed, if my mother knew it it would break her heart.” I do not know here, and therefore her mother will never know it from me, but she says, “Can I be saved?” Young

woman, you can! She says that she is worse than Magdalene, for Magdalene did not know Christ when she was a sinner, but she did know the gospel, and yet sinned. Oh! well, if you are worse than Magdalene, Christ will be glorified in saving such a one as you are. Only come with all your sin about you, and throw yourself at his feet. Trust him! Trust him! Do him the honour to believe that he can save even such an abominable sinner as you have been. Though you have gone to the utmost extremity of human guilt, and looked over the gulf of endless misery, yet still believe him; trust him, and he will be as good as ever you can think him to be; for when you think your highest thoughts of him, he is higher than your highest thoughts, and can save even to the uttermost. The priests were obedient to the faith; why not you? They believed in Christ, saw the fold, entered in, and were saved; why should not you be like them? Did you notice how it is described? They were “obedient to the faith.” Then it seems that the gospel is all summed up in that word “faith.” To be obedient to the faith; to believe that Jesus is the Son of God; to trust him because he has suffered in your stead; to believe that the divine justice is satisfied with the death of Christ, and to rely upon that satisfaction which Christ has rendered, that is to be saved, to be obedient to the faith. We sang at the Lord’s Table, this morning, that sweet verse which really is the quintessence of the gospel, and therefore I will repeat it to you, though you already know it so well: —

“Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.”

Yes, just as you are come and depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. And this is what the stir is all about, we cannot bear that you should drift down to destruction, we cannot bear that there should be cataracts of souls leaping down the eternal gulf. We cannot endure that Satan should gloat his malicious soul with the prey of tens of thousands of mankind. We cannot bear that Christ should stand neglected, that his cross should be despised, that his blood should be trampled on. O come to him! He will not reject you. Him that cometh unto

him he will in no wise cast out. Breathe a silent prayer to him now. Cast your soul upon him, sink or swim.

“Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude,
None but Jesus Can do helpless sinners good.”

But he can do it. Rely on him, and eternal life is yours.

Brethren and sisters, as we are in the New Year now, and have only reached the second Sabbath in it, let us begin and sweep out of the house the old leaven of ease and self-indulgences and lukewarmness, and let it be our cry before we go to our beds tonight, that the Lord would make us to be real living Christians, make us flames of fire from this time forth truly to serve him who served us even to the death. You will never get to be too warm. I am persuaded you will not be too zealous. I only wish I could get into such a devout enthusiasm myself as that of the apostle Paul when constrained by the love of Christ, he said, “Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God.” When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. How much more unprofitable when we have done so little! The Lord quicken this church. The February meetings are coming on, when we shall be specially and earnestly seeking the ingathering of souls. Believers, you who are mighty with God in secret, pray for these February meetings, that the month may be a holy month to us, the best month we have ever had, that more may be gathered into the church than ever have been in our times. Make that a point of prayer, and prove God now whether he will not hear you, and you shall find he will to your soul’s comfort. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 5th, 1868, by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

— Acts 3:19

After the notable miracle of healing the lame man, when the wondering people clustered round about Peter and John, they were not at all at a loss for a subject upon which to address them. Those holy men were brimful of the gospel, and therefore they had but to run over spontaneously, speaking of that topic which laid nearest to their hearts. To the Christian minister it should never be difficult to speak of Christ; and in whatever position he may be placed, he should never have to ask himself, “What is an appropriate subject for this people?” for the gospel is always in season, always appropriate, and if it be but spoken from the heart, it will be sure to work its way. Turning to the assembled multitude, Peter began at once to preach to them the gospel without a single second's hesitation. Oh! blessed readiness of a soul on fire with the Spirit, Lord, grant it to us evermore. Observe how earnestly Peter turns aside their attention from himself and his brother John to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” The object of the Christian minister should always be to withdraw attention from himself to his subject, so that it should not be said, “How well he spake!” but, “Upon what weighty matters he treated!” They are priests of Baal, who, with

their gaudy dresses, and their pretensions to a mysterious power, would have you look to themselves as the channels of grace, as though by their priestcraft, if not by their holiness, they could work miracles; but they are true messengers of God who continually say, “Look not on us as though we could do anything: the whole power to bless you lies in Jesus Christ, and in the gospel of his salvation.”

It is noteworthy that Peter, in addressing this crowd, came at once to the very essence and bowels of his message. He did not beat the bush; he did not shoot his arrow far afield, but he hit the very centre of the target. He preached not merely the gospel of good news, but Christ, the person of Christ; Christ crucified — crucified by them, Christ risen, Christ glorified of his Father. Depend upon it, this is the very strength of the Christian ministry, when it is saturated with the name and person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Christ away, and you ungospelise the gospel, you do but pour out husks such as swine do eat, while the precious kernel is removed, seeing you have taken away the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there was ever an occasion when a preacher of the gospel might have forgotten to speak of Christ, it was surely the occasion on which Peter spake so boldly of him. For, might it not have been said, “Talk not of Jesus; they have just now haled him to the death: the people are mad against him; preach the truth, but do not mention his name; deliver his doctrine, but withhold the mention of his person, for you will excite them to madness; you will put your own life in jeopardy; you will scarcely do good while they are so prejudiced, and you may do much mischief”? But, instead of this, let them rage as they would, Peter would tell them about Jesus Christ, and about nothing else but Jesus Christ. He knew this to be the power of God unto salvation, and he would not flinch from it; so to them, even to them, he delivered the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, with a pungency as well as a simplicity scarcely to be rivalled. Notice how he puts it: “Ye” have slain him; “ye” have crucified him; “ye” have preferred a murderer. He is not afraid of being personal; he does not shirk the touching of men’s consciences; he rather thrusts his hand into their hearts and make them feel their sin; he labours to open a window into the darkness of their spirits, to let the light of the Holy Ghost shine into their soul. Even thus, my brethren, when we preach the gospel, must we do: affectionately but graciously must we deal with men. Far hence be all trimming and mincing of matters. Accursed let him be that takes away

from the gospel of Jesus Christ that he may win popular applause, or who bates his breath and smoothes his tongue that he may please the unholy throng. Such a man may have for a moment the approbation of fools, but, as the Lord his God liveth, he shall be set as a target for the arrows of vengeance in the day when the Lord cometh to judge the nations. Peter, then, boldly and earnestly preached the gospel — preached the Christ of the gospel — preached it personally and directly at the crowd who were gathered around him.

Nor did Peter fail, when he had enunciated the gospel, to make the personal application by prescribing its peculiar commands. Grown up among us is a school of men who say that they rightly preach the gospel to sinners when they merely deliver statements of what the gospel is, and of the result of dying unsaved, but they grow furious and talk of unsoundness if any venture to say to the sinner, “Believe,” or “Repent.” To this school Peter did not belong — into their secret he had never come, and with their assembly, were he alive now, he would not be joined. For, having first told his hearers of Christ, of his life and death and resurrection, he then proceeds to plunge the sword, as it were, up to the very hilt in their consciences by saying, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” There, I say, in that promiscuous crowd, gathered together by curiosity, attracted by the miracle which he had wrought, Peter felt no hesitation, and asked no question; he preached the same gospel as he would have preached to us today if he were here, and preached it in the most fervent and earnest style, preached the angles and the corners of it, and then preached the practical part of it, addressing himself with heart, and soul, and energy, to every one in that crowd, and saying, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

Now there are four remarks which will make up the discourse of this morning, when they are enlarged.

I. And the first is this, that **THE APOSTLE BADE MEN REPENT AND BE CONVERTED.** Of this our text is proof enough without our going afield for other instances. Repent signifies, in its literal meaning, to change one’s mind. It has been translated, “after-wit,” or “after-wisdom;” it is the man’s finding out that he was wrong, and rectifying his judgment. But although that be the meaning of the root, the word has come in scriptural

use to mean a great deal more. Perhaps there is no better definition of repentance than that which is given in our little children's hymnbook —

“Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more.”

Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character, which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved. Conversion, if translated, means a turning round, a turning from, and a turning to — a turning from sin, a turning to holiness — a turning from carelessness to thought, from the world to heaven, from self to Jesus — a complete turning. The word here used, though translated in the English, “Repent and be converted,” is not so in the Greek; it is really, “Repent and convert,” or, rather, “Repent and turn.” It is an active verb, just as the other was. “Repent and turn.” When the demoniac had the devils cast out of him — I may compare that to repentance; but when he put on his garments, and was no longer naked and filthy, but was said to be clothed and in his right mind, I may compare that to conversion. When the prodigal was feeding his swine, and on a sudden began to consider and to come to himself, that was repentance. When he set out and left the far country, and went to his father's house, that was conversion. Repentance is a part of conversion. It is, perhaps, I may say, the gate or door of it. It is that Jordan through which we pass when we turn from the desert of sin to seek the Canaan of conversion. Regeneration is the implanting of a new nature, and one of the earliest signs of that is, a faith in Christ, and a repentance of sin, and a consequent conversion from that which is evil to that which is good.

The apostle Peter, addressing the crowd, said to them, “Change your minds; be sorry for what you have done; forsake your old ways; be turned; become new men.” That was his message as I have now put it into other words.

Now, brethren, it has been said, and said most truly, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit of God. You do not need that I should stop to prove that doctrine. We have preached it to you a thousand

times, and we are prepared to prove that if anything be taught in Scripture, that is. There never was any genuine repentance in this world which was not the work of the Holy Spirit. For this purpose our Lord Jesus has gone on high: "He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." All true conversion is the work of the Holy Ghost. You may rightly pray in the words of the prophet, "Turn thou us, and we shall be turned;" for until God turn us, turn we never shall; and unless he convert us, our conversion is but a mistake. Hear it as a gospel summons —

"True belief and true repentance,
Every grace which brings us nigh;
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

"And yet," say you, "and yet the apostle Peter actually says to us, 'Repent, and be converted!' That is, you tell us with one breath that these things are the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then with the next breath you read the text, 'Repent, and be converted.'" Ay, I do, I do, and thank God I have learned to do so. But you will say, "How reconcile you these two things?" I answer, it is no part of my commission to reconcile my Master's words: my commission is to preach the truth as I find it — to deliver it to you fresh from his hand. I not only believe these things to be agreeable to one another, but I think I see wherein they do agree, but I utterly despair of making the most of what is written in Scripture, and to accept it all, whether we can see the agreement of the two sets of truths or no — to accept them both because they are both revealed. With that hand I hold as firmly as any man living, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit, but I would sooner lose this hand, and both, than I would give up preaching that it is the duty of men to repent and to believe, and the duty of Christian ministers to say to them, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." If men will not receive truth till they understand it, there are many things which they never will receive. Ay, there are many facts, common facts in nature, which nobody would deny but a fool, which yet must be denied if we will not believe them till we understand them. There is a fish fresh taken from the sea: you take it to the cook to serve it on the table. You eat salt with it, do you? What for? You will have it dried and salted, but what for? Did not it always live in the salt sea? Why then is it not salt? It is as fresh as though

it had lived in the purling brooks of the upland country — not a particle of salt about it — yet it has lived wholly in the salt sea! Do you understand that? No, you cannot. But there it is, a fresh fish in a salt sea! And yonder are an ox and a sheep, and they are eating in the same meadow, feeding precisely on the same food, and the grass in one case turns to beef, in the other case to mutton, and on one animal there is hair and on the other wool. How is that? Do you understand it? So there may be two great truths in Scripture, which are both truths, and yet all the wise men in the world might be confounded to bring those two truths together. I do not understand, I must confess, why Moses was told to cut down a tree and put it in the bitter waters of Marah; I cannot see any connection between a tree and the water, so that the tree should make it sweet, but yet I do believe that when Moses put the tree into the water the bitterness of Marah departed, and the stream was sweet. I do not know why it is that Elisha, when he went to Jericho, and found the water nauseous, said “Bring me a cruse of salt;” I do not know why his putting the salt into the stream should make it sweet — it looks to me as if it would operate the other way; but I believe the miracle, namely, that the salt was put in, and that it was sweetened. So I do not understand how it is that my bidding impenitent sinners to repent should in any way be likely to make them do so, but I know it does — I see it every day. I do not know why a poor weak creature saying to his fellow men, “Believe,” should lead them to believe, but it does so, and the Holy Spirit blesses it, and they do believe and are saved; and if we cannot see how, if we see the fact, we will be content and bless God for it. Perhaps you may be aware that an attempt has been made by ingenious expositors to get rid of the force of this text. Some of our Hyper-Calvinist friends, who are so earnest against anything like exhortations and invitations, have tried by some means to disembowel this text if they could, to take something out and put something else in; they have said that the repentance to which men are here exhorted is but an outward repentance. But how is it so, when it is added, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”? Does a merely outward repentance bring with it the blotting out of sin? Assuredly not. The repentance to which men are here exhorted is a repentance which brings with it complete pardon — “that your sins may be blotted out.” And, moreover, it seems to me to be a shocking thing to suppose that Peter and John went about preaching up a hollow, outward repentance, which would

not save men. My brethren who make that remark would themselves be ashamed to preach up outward repentance. I am sure they would think they were not ministers of God at all if they preached up any merely outward virtue. It shows to what shifts they must be driven when they twist the Scriptures so horribly with so little reason. Brethren, it was a soul-saving repentance, and nothing less than that, which Peter commanded of these men. Now, let us come to the point. We tell men to repent and believe, not because we rely on any power in them to do so, for we know them to be dead in trespasses and sins; not because we depend upon any power in our earnestness or in our speech to make them do so, for we understand that our preaching is less than nothing apart from God; but because the gospel is the mysterious engine by which God converts the hearts of men, and we find that, if we speak in faith, God the Holy Ghost operates with us, and while we bid the dry bones live, the Spirit makes them live — while we tell the lame man to stand on his feet, the mysterious energy makes his ankle-bones to receive strength — while we tell the impotent man to stretch out his hand, a divine power goes with the command, and the hand is stretched out and the man is restored. The power lies not in the sinner, not in the preacher, but in the Holy Spirit, which works effectually with the gospel by divine decree, so that where the truth is preached the elect of God are quickened by it, souls are saved, and God is glorified. Go on, my dear brethren, preaching the gospel boldly, and be not afraid of the result, for, however little may be your strength, and though your eloquence may be as nought, yet God has promised to make his gospel the power to save, and so it shall be down to the world's end.

See then, ye that are unsaved, before I leave this point, see what it is we are bound to require of you this morning. It is, that ye repent and be converted. We are not satisfied with having your ear, nor your eyes; we are not content with having you gathered in the house of worship — it is all in vain that you have come here, except you repent and be converted. We are not come to tell you that you must reform a little, and mend your ways in some degree: except you put your trust in Christ, forsake your old way of life, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, you must perish. This — nothing short of this — is the gospel requirement. No church-going, no chapel-going, will save you; no bowing of the knee, no outward form of worship, no pretensions and professions to godliness- ye must repent of

your sins and forsake them, and if ye do not this, neither shall your sins be blotted out. Thus much, then, on the first point: the apostle commanded men to repent and be converted.

II. In the second place, THERE WAS GOOD REASON FOR THIS COMMAND.

The text says, “Repent ye therefore.” The apostle was logical: he had a reason for his exhortation. It was not mere declamation, but sound reasoning. “Repent ye therefore.” What, then, was the argument? Why, first, because you, like the Jews, have put Jesus Christ to death. This was literally true of the people to whom he spake: they had had a share in Christ’s execution. And this is spiritually true of you to whom I speak this morning. Every sin in the essence of it is a killing of God. Do you comprehend me? Every time you do what God would not have you do, you do in effect, so far as you can, put God out of his throne, and disown the authority which belongs to his Godhead; you do in intent, so far as you can, kill God. That is the drift of sin — sin is a God-killing thing. Every violation of law is treason in its essence — it is rebellion against the lawgiver. When our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the tree by sinners, sin only did then literally and openly what all sin really does in a spiritual sense. Do you understand me? Those offendings of yours which you have thought so little of, have been really a stabbing at the Deity. Will you not repent, if it be so? While you thought your sins to be mere trifles, light things to be laughed at, you would not repent; but now I have shown you (and I think your conscience will bear me out) that every sin is really an attempt to thrust God out of the world, that every sin is saying, “Let there be no God.” Oh! then there is cause enough to repent of it. Come hither and reason with me, thou who hast broken God’s law. Suppose the principle of thy disobedience were carried out to the full, would not all laws be disregarded, and moral government subverted? And why not, since what one may do another has clearly the same right to do? What, then, if the authority of God should be no more owned in the universe — where should we all be? What a hell above ground would this world become! What a moral chaos and den of beasts! Do you not see what a mischievous thing, then, your iniquity has been? Repent and turn from it. If you can really believe this morning that though you did not nail Christ to the cross, nor plait the crown of thorns and put it on his head, nor stand and mock

him there, yet that every sin is a real crucifixion of Christ, and a mockery of Christ, and a slaughter of Christ. Then, truly, there is abundant reason why you should repent and turn from it.

The apostle also used another argument, namely, that he whom they had slain was a most blessed person — one so blessed that God the Father had exalted him. Jesus Christ came not into this world with any selfish motive, but entirely out of philanthropy, full of love to men; and yet men put him to death! Now, every sin is an insult against the good and kind God. God does not deserve that we should rebel against him. If he were a great tyrant domineering over us, putting us to misery, there might be some excuse for our sin, but when he acts like a tender father to us, supplying our wants day by day, and forgiving our offenses, it is a shame, a cruel shame, that we should live in daily revolt against him. You who have not believed in Christ, have mighty cause for repenting that you have not believed in him, seeing he is so good and kind. What hurt has he ever done you that you should curse at him? What injury has Jesus done to any one of you that you should despise him? You deny his Deity, perhaps; or, at any rate, you despise the great salvation which he came into this world to work out. Does he deserve this of you? Prince of life and glory, King of angels, the adored of seraphs, art thou despised of men for whom thy blood was shed? Oh, what an accursed thing, then, sin must be, since it treats so badly so kind and blessed a person! This ought to make us melt, this should make us shed the drops of pity and of grief; we ought, indeed, to turn from our idle and evil ways when against Jesus we have so offended.

Moreover, Peter used another plea, that while they had rejected the blessed Christ they had chosen a murderer. Sinner, thou hast despised Christ, and what is it thou hast chosen? Has it been the drunkard's cup? Oh, what a bestial thing to prefer to Christ! Or has it been thy lust? What a devilish thing to set in the place of Christ! Man, what have thy sins done to thee that thou shouldst prefer them to Jesus? Have you lived in them for years? then what wages have you had? what profit have you had? Tell me now, you that have gone the farthest in sin, tell me now, are you satisfied with the service? Would you wish to go over again the days you have lived, and to reap in your own bodies the fruit of your misdeeds? Nay, but you serve a hard master; a murderer from the beginning is that devil to whom you surrender your lives. Oh, then, this is a thing to be

repented of — that you have cast Christ away, but have chosen a murderer. “Not this man,” say you, “but Barabbas.” You will take this murderous world, this killing sin, but the blessed Saviour, you let him go. Is not there good argument here for repentance and conversion? Surely there is.

Peter clenches his reasoning with another argument, bringing down, if I may so say, the big hammer this time upon the head of the nail. It is this, that the Lord Christ, whom you have hitherto despised, is able to do great things for you. “His name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know.” Christ then, by faith in him, is able to do for you all that you want. If you will trust Jesus today, all your iniquities shall be blotted out; the past shall not be remembered; the present shall be rendered safe, and the future blessed. If thou trustest in Christ, there is no sin which he will not forgive thee, no evil habit the power of which he will not break, no foul propensity the weight of which he cannot remove. Believing in him, he can make thee blessed beyond a dream. And is not this cause for repentance, that thou shouldst have slighted one who can do thee so much good? With hands loaded with love he stands outside the door of your heart. Is not this good reason for opening the door and letting the heavenly stranger in, when he can bless you to such a vast extent of benediction? What, will you reject your own mercies? Will you despise the heaven which shall be yours if you will have my Master? Will you choose the doom from which none but he can rescue you, and let go the glory to which none but he can admit you? When I think of the usefulness of Christ to perishing sinners, there is indeed abundant cause for repentance that you should not have closed with him long ago, and accepted him to be your all in all. Thus you see the apostle argued with them by that word “Therefore.”

There was one other plea which he used, which I would employ this morning. He said, “Brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it.” As if he would say, “Now that ye have more light, repent of what you did in the dark.” So might I say to some here present. You had not heard the gospel, you did not know that sin was so bad a thing, you did not understand that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost them that came unto God by him. Well, now you do understand it. The times of your ignorance God winks at, but now, “commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” Greater

light brings greater responsibility. Do not go back to your sin, lest it become tenfold sin to you; for if you do in the light what once you did in the darkness, he who winked at you when you knew no better, may lift his hand, and swear that you shall never enter into his rest, because you sinned presumptuously, and did despite to the Spirit of his grace. I charge every unconverted man here to mind what he is at in future. If he did not know that Jesus was able to save him before, he knows it now; if he was in the dark till this morning, he is not in the dark any longer. "Now ye have no cloak for your sin." Therefore, because the cloak is pulled away, and you sin against the light, I say as Peter did, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

III. But now, our third remark shall be given with brevity, and it is this, **THAT WITHOUT REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION, SIN CANNOT BE PARDONED.**

The expression used in the text, "blotted out," in the original may be better explained in this way. Many Oriental merchants kept their accounts on little tablets of wax. On these tablets of wax, they indented marks which recorded the debts, and when these debts were paid, they took the blunt end of the stylus or pencil, and just flattened down the wax, and the account entirely disappeared. That was the form of "blotting out" in those days. Now, he that repents and is pardoned, is, through the precious blood of Christ, so entirely forgiven, that there is no record of his sin left. It is as though the stylus had levelled the marks in the wax, and there was no record left. What a beautiful picture of the forgiveness of sin! It is all gone, not a trace left. If we blot out an account from our books, there is the blot: the record is gone, but there is the blot; but on the wax tablet there was no blot — it was all gone, and the wax was smooth. So is it with the sin of God's people when removed by Jesus' blood, it is all gone and gone for ever. But rest assured it cannot be removed except there be repentance and conversion as the result of faith in Jesus. This must be so, for this is most seemly. Would you expect a great king to forgive an erring courtier unless the offender first confessed his fault? Where is the honour and dignity of the throne of God, if men are to be pardoned while as yet they will not confess their sin? In the next place, it would not be moral; it would be pulling up the very sluices of immorality to tell men that they could be pardoned while they went on in their sins and loved them. What, a thief

pardoned and continue to thief! A harlot forgiven and remain unchaste! The drunkard forgiven and yet delight in his tankards! Truly, then, the gospel would be the servant of unrighteousness, and against us who preach it morality should make a law. But it is not so, impenitent sinners shall be damned, let them boast what they will about grace. My hearer, thou must hate thy sin, or God will hate thee. Thou must turn or burn. Thou canst not have thy sins and go to heaven. Which shall it be? Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or hold thy sins and go to hell? Which shall it be, for it must be one or the other; there must be a divorce between us and sin, or there cannot be a marriage between us and Christ. Does not conscience tell us this? There is not a conscience here that will say to a man, "You can hope to be saved and yet live as you list." Some have said this — I query if any have believed it. No, no, no, blind as conscience is, and though its voice be often very feeble, yet there is enough of sight about conscience to see that continuance in sin and pardon cannot consist, and that there must be a forsaking of iniquity if there is to be a forgiving of it. But, my hearer, whether your conscience shall say so or not, God says it; "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy," but there is no promise for the unrepenting. God declares that he that repents shall be forgiven. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;" but for haughty Pharaoh, who says, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" there is nothing but eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. He who goeth on in his iniquity and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Ah! I have no pardons to preach to you who settle your minds to continue in sin, no gentle notes of love at all, nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. But ah! if you loathe your sins, if God's Holy Spirit has made you hate your past lives, if you are anxious to be made new men in Christ Jesus, I have nothing but notes of love for you. Believe in Jesus, cast yourself on him, for he has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The door is shut and fast bolted to every man who will keep his sin, but it is wide open even to the biggest sinner out of hell, if he will not leave his sin and lay hold of Jesus and put his trust in him.

IV. The last remark is this — REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION WILL BE REGARDED AS PECULIARLY PRECIOUS IN THE FUTURE, for my text says, “That your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

A very difficult passage indeed. Its meaning is scarcely known. Three or four meanings have been attached to it. In the first place, I think it means this — he that repents and is converted, shall enjoy the blotting out of sin in that season of sweet peace which always follows pardon. After a man has been thoroughly broken down on account of sin, God deals with him very tenderly. Amongst the very happiest parts of human life are the hours immediately after conversion. You know how we sing —

“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”

When the broken bone begins to heal, David puts it, “Thou makest the bones which thou hast broken to rejoice.” When the prisoner first gets out of prison, when the fetters for the first time clank music as they fall broken to the ground! when the sick man leaves the sick chamber of his convictions to breathe the air of liberty, and to feel the health of a pardoned sinner! Oh, if you did but know what a bliss it is to be forgiven, you would never stay away from Christ! But you do not know, and cannot tell how sweet it is to be washed in the precious blood, and wrapped about with the fair white linen, and to have the kiss of the heavenly Father on your cheek! O “repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

Perhaps these “times of refreshing” may also relate to times of revival in the Christian church. The only way in which you, dear friends, can share in the refreshment of a revival, is by your own repenting and being converted. A revival is a great refreshment to the church. I pray that a mighty wave may sweep over Great Britain, for much we need it. But of what use is a revival to an unpardoned sinner? It is like the soft south wind blowing upon a corpse — it can bring no genial warmth therewith. If you repent, and be converted, then, amidst the general joy of the revival, you shall have this joy, that your sins have been blotted out. What a mournful cry is that, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not

saved!" I think I hear that cry from some in the Tabernacle this morning. Oh, that blessed month of February and the beginning of March! It was to us like a harvest and a summer. What prayers, what tears, what cries! How full this house was to pray! How all day long from before the daystar shone til long after sunset we continued in prayer! But you are not saved, some of you. The harvest and the summer is ended, and you are not saved. Ah! I have been praying to God that you may yet be saved now. I am unable to achieve a purpose which has been hot upon my heart — to go and preach to a greater congregation in the Agricultural Hall during the next month: I find myself restrained by the Master's hand. Ill-health has returned to me, and most probably there are months of weariness and pain awaiting me; but I have prayed that if I may not cast the net in the greater place, I may have the more of you here. We cannot have a larger congregation, but I would fain have more conversions. It is hard preaching, it is dull working, unless there be results. We must have conversions. As that woman of old said, "Give me children or I die," so is it with the preacher: he must have sinners saved, or he prays to die. Dear hearer, if these times of refreshing may come, our prayer is that you may repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and so may partake to the full in the priceless blessings of the season.

Once more, the text means, according to the context, the second advent. Jesus is yet to come a second time, and like a mighty shower flooding a desert shall his coming be. His church shall revive and be refreshed; she shall once again lift up her head from her lethargy, and her body from her sepulchre. But woe unto you who are not saved when Christ cometh, for the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light to you. When Christ cometh to the unconverted, "the day shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi." Oh, if ye repent and be converted, ye shall stand fully absolved in the day of his coming, when heaven and earth do reel, when the solid rock begins to melt, and the stars, like fig-leaves withered, fall from the tree, when the trumpet sounds exceeding loud and long, "Awake, ye dead and come to judgment," when the grand assize is sitting, and the Judge shall be there — the Judge of quick and dead, to separate the righteous from the wicked. The Lord

have mercy upon you in that day; and so he shall if his grace shall make you obedient to the words of our text, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

THE APPROACHABLENESS OF JESUS

A Sermon

Delivered on Sunday Evening, May 3rd, 1868, by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

*“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners
for to hear him.”*

— Luke 15:1

The most depraved and despised classes of society formed an inner ring of hearers around our Lord. I gather from this that he was a most approachable person, that he was not of repulsive manners, but that he courted human confidence and was willing that men should commune with him.

Upon that one thought I shall enlarge, this evening, and may the Holy Spirit make it a loadstone to draw many hearts to Jesus. Eastern monarchs affected great seclusion, and were wont to surround themselves with impassable barriers of state. It was very difficult for even their most loyal subjects to approach them. You remember the case of Esther, who, though the monarch was her husband, yet went with her life in her hand when she ventured to present herself before the king Ahasuerus, for there was a commandment that none should come unto the king except they were called, at peril of their lives. It is not so with the King of kings. His court is far more splendid; his person is far more worshipful; but you may draw near to him at all times without let or hindrance. He hath set no men-at-arms around his palace gate. The door of his house of mercy is set wide open. Over the lintel of his palace gate is written, “For every one that

asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

Even in our own days great men are not readily to be come at. There are so many back stairs to be climbed before you can reach the official who might have helped you, so many subalterns to be parleyed with, and servants to be passed by, that there is no coming at your object. The good men may be affable enough themselves, but they remind us of the old Russian fable of the hospitable householder in a village, who was willing enough to help all the poor who came to his door, but he kept so many big dogs loose in his yard that nobody was able to get up to the threshold, and therefore his personal affability was of no service to the wanderers. It is not so with our Master. Though he is greater than the greatest, and higher than the highest, he has been pleased to put out of the way everything which might keep the sinner from entering into his halls of gracious entertainment. From his lips we hear no threatenings against intrusion, but hundreds of invitations to the nearest and dearest intimacy. Jesus is to be approached, not now and then, but at all times, and not by some favoured few, but by all in whose hearts his Holy Spirit has enkindled the desire to enter into his secret presence.

The philosophical teachers of our Lord's day affected very great seclusion. They considered their teachings to be so profound and eclectic that they were not to be uttered in the hearing of the common multitude. “Far hence, ye profane,” was their scornful motto. Like Simon Stylites, they stood upon a lofty pillar of their fancied self-conceit, and dropped down now and then a stray thought upon the vulgar herd beneath, but they did not condescend to talk familiarly with them, considering it to be a dishonour to their philosophy to communicate it to the multitude. One of the greatest philosophers wrote over his door, “Let no one who is ignorant of geometry enter here;” but our Lord, compared with whom all the wise men are but fools, who is, in fact, the wisdom of God, never drove away a sinner because of his ignorance, never refused a seeker because he was not yet initiated, and had not any thirsty spirit to be chased away from the crystal spring of truth divine. His every word was a diamond, and his lips dropped pearls, but he was never more at home than when speaking to the common people, and teaching them concerning the kingdom of God.

You may thus contrast and compare our Lord's gentle manners with those of kings, and nobles, and sages, but you shall find none to equal him in condescending tenderness. To this attractive quality of our Lord I intend, this evening, as God shall help me, to ask your earnest attention. First, let us prove it; secondly, illustrate it; and, thirdly, enforce or improve it.

I. First, let us PROVE THE APPROACHABLENESS OF CHRIST, though it really needs no proof, for it is a fact which lies upon the surface of his life.

1. You may see it conspicuously in his office. Those offices are too many for us to take them all tonight. We will just cull a handful; say three. Our Lord Jesus is said to be the Mediator between God and man. Now, observe, that the office of mediator implies at once that he should be approachable. A daysman, as Job says, is one who can put his hand upon both; but if Jesus will not familiarly put his hand on man, certainly he is no daysman between God and man. A mediator is not a mediator of one — he must be akin to both the parties between whom he mediates. If Jesus Christ shall be a perfect mediator between God and man, he must be able to come to God so near that God shall call him his fellow, and then he must approach to man so closely that he shall not be ashamed to call him brother. This is precisely the case with our Lord. Do think of this, you who are afraid of Jesus. He is a mediator, and as a mediator you may come to him. Jacob's ladder reached from earth to heaven, but if he had cut away half-a-dozen of the bottom rounds, what would have been the good of it? Who could ascend by it into the hill of the Lord? Jesus Christ is the great conjunction between earth and heaven, but if he will not touch the poor mortal man who comes to him, why then, of what service is he to the sons of men? You do need a mediator between your soul and God; you must not think of coming to God without a mediator; but you do not want any mediator between yourselves and Christ. There is a preparation for coming to God — you must not come to God without a perfect righteousness; but you may come to Jesus without any preparation, and without any righteousness, because as mediator he has in himself all the righteousness and fitness that you require, and is ready to bestow them upon you. You may come boldly to him even now; he waits to reconcile you unto God by his blood.

Another of his offices is that of priest. That word “priest” has come to smell very badly nowadays; but, for all that, it is a very sweet word as we find it in Holy Scripture. The word “priest” does not mean a gaudily-dressed pretender, who stands apart from other worshippers within the gate, two steps higher than the rest of the people, who professes to have power to dispense pardon for human sin, and I know not what beside. The true priest was truly the brother of all the people. There was no man in the whole camp so brotherly as Aaron. So much were Aaron and the priests who succeeded him the first points of contact with men, on God’s behalf, that when a leper had become too unclean for anybody else to draw near to him, the last man who touched him was the priest. The house might be leprous, but he talked with him, and examined him, the last of Israel’s tribes who might be familiar with the wretched outcast; and if afterwards that diseased man was cured, the first person who touched him must be a priest. “Go, show thyself to the priest,” was the command, to every recovering leper; and until the priest had entered into fellowship with him, and had given him a certificate of health, he could not be received into the Jewish camp. The priest was the true brother of the people, chosen from among themselves, at all times to be approached; living in their midst, in the very centre of the camp, ready to make intercession for the sinful and the sorrowful. So is it with our Lord. I read just now, in your hearing, that he can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and that he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Surely, you will never doubt that if Jesus perfectly sustains the office of priest, as he certainly does, he must be the most approachable of beings, approachable by the poor sinner, who has given himself up to despair, whom only a sacrifice can save; approachable by the foul harlot who is put outside the camp, whom only the blood can cleanse; approachable by the miserable thief who has to suffer the punishment of his crimes, whom only the great High Priest can absolve. No other man may care to touch you, O trembling outcast, but Jesus will. You may be separated from all of human kind, justly and righteously, by your iniquities, but you are not separated from that great friend of sinners who at this very time is willing that publicans and sinners should draw near unto him.

As a third office let me mention that the Lord Jesus is our Saviour; but I see not how he can be a Saviour unless he can be approached by those who

need to be saved. The priest and the Levite passed by on the other side when the bleeding man lay in the road to Jericho; they were not saviours, therefore, and could not be, but he was the saviour who came to know where the man was, stooped over him, and took wine and oil and poured them into the gaping fissures of his wounds, and lifted him up with tender love and set him on his own beast, and led him to the inn. He was the true saviour; and, O sinner, Jesus Christ will come just where you are, and your wounds of sin, even though they are putrid, shall not drive him away from you. His love shall overcome the nauseating offensiveness of your iniquity, for he is able and willing to save such as you are. I might mention many other of the offices of Christ, but these three will suffice. Certainly if the Spirit blesses them, you will be led to see that Jesus is not hard to reach.

2. Consider a few of his names and titles. Frequently Jesus is called the “Lamb.” Blessed name! I do not suppose there is any one here who was ever afraid of a lamb; that little girl yonder, if she saw a lamb, would not be frightened. Every child seems almost instinctively to long to put its hand on the head of a lamb. O that you might come and put your hand on the head of Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

“Oh see how Jesus trusts himself
 Unto our childish love,
 As though by his free ways with us
 Our earnestness to prove!
 His sacred name a common word
 On earth he loves to hear;
 There is no majesty in him
 Which love may not come near.”

Again, you find him called a Shepherd: no one is afraid of a shepherd. If you were travelling in the East, and you saw Bedouins or Turkish soldiery in the distance, you might be alarmed; but if some one said, “Oh, it is only a few shepherds,” you would not be afraid of them. The sheep are not at all timid when near the shepherd. O poor wandering sheep, you, perhaps, have come to be afraid of Christ, but there is no reason why you should be, for this heavenly Shepherd says, “I will seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”

“See Israel’s gentle Shepherd stands
With all engaging charms.”

Timid, foolish, and wandering though you may be, there is nothing in the good Shepherd to drive you away from him, but everything to entice you to come to him. Then, again, he is called our Brother, and one always feels that he may approach his brother. I have no thought of trouble or distress which I would hesitate to communicate to my brother here, for he is so good and kind. I do not think I could be in any trouble which I should not expect him to do his best to help me out of. I never feel that there is any distance between him and me, nor do you, I hope, feel so with regard to your brothers. Even so, is it with this Brother born for adversity. Believer, how is it that you are sometimes so backward and so cold towards Jesus? Christ is approachable.

“The light of love is round his feet,
His paths are never dim;
And he comes nigh to us when we
Dare not come nigh to him.”

You need not think that your troubles are too trifling to bring to him; he has an open ear for the little daily vexations of life. Brethren, you can come to the good elder Brother at all hours; and when he blames you for coming, let me know. He is called, too, a Friend; but he would be a very unfriendly friend who could not be approached by those he professed to love. If my friend puts a hedge around himself, and holds himself so very dignified that I may not speak with him, I would rather be without his friendship; but if he be a genuine friend, and I stand at his door knocking, he will say, “Come in, and welcome; what can I do for you?” Such a friend is Jesus Christ. He is to be met with by all needy, seeking hearts.

3. There is room enough for enlargement here, but I have no time to say more, therefore I will give you another plea. Recollect his person. The person of our Lord Jesus Christ proclaims this truth with a trumpet voice. I say his person, because he is man, born of woman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ is God, but if he were God only, you might well stand at a distance, and shudder at the splendour of his majesty. But he is man as well as God, and so it comes to pass, as Dr. Watts puts it —

“Till God in human flesh I see,
 My thoughts no comfort find;
 The holy, just, and sacred
 Three Are terrors to my mind.
 But if Immanuel’s face appear,
 My hope, my joy begins;
 His name forbids my slavish fear,
 His grace removes my sins.”

When I see Christ in the manger where the horned ox fed, or hanging on a woman’s breast, or obedient to his parents, or “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” a poor man without a place whereon to lay his head, then I feel that I can freely come to him. Think of him as being precisely such as you are, in all and everything except sin, and then you will never have a thought that he will chide you for drawing near, or drive you away when you venture to supplicate him. But I want especially to say to you that if you could but see my Master’s person as he was when here on earth, you would have henceforth and for ever the thought that you might not come to him expelled from your mind. I know not what may have been his beauties, or what may have been the appearance of his lovely countenance, but of this I am persuaded, that if he could but come here tonight, and I could vacate this platform for him whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose, you who groan under a sense of unworthiness would not run away. If Moses stood here with his flaming countenance, you would shade your eyes, and ask that if you must look upon him he might wear a veil; but if Christ were here, oh! how you longing seeking ones would gaze upon him! There would be no drooping of the eyelids, no covering of the face, no alarm, no anguish — his face is too sweet for that. And if the Master should walk down the aisles, the most timid of you would long to touch the hem of his garment and to kiss the floor whereon he had set his feet. I know you would not fear to look into that face. And then that voice, how would you be charmed, you poor trembling seekers, if you heard him say, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;” you would discover such meekness and lowliness in him, that you would not think of starting back. Oh! if your eyes could but see him, I feel persuaded that, graciously drawn by his charms, your hearts would hasten to him. Well, believer, come to him, come to him; come close to him. Come with

your troubles and tell him all about them. Come with your sins and ask to have them washed away anew.

“Let us be simple with him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old.”

And you, poor trembling sinner, come to him; come to him now, for he has said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Oh! if your eyes were opened to behold him, you would perceive that the glory of his person lies not in the splendour which repels, but in the majesty which divinely attracts.

4. If this suffice not, let me here remind you of the language of Christ, He proclaims his approachability in such words as these, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Ye horny-handed sons of toil, ye smiths and carpenters, ye ploughers and diggers, come unto me, yea, come all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And again, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” He invites men to come; he pleads with them to come; and when they will not come he gently upbraids them with such words as these, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” And, again, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” It is not “I would not,” but “ye would not.” Why, the whole of Scripture in its invitations, may be said to be the language of Christ, and therein you find loving, pleading words of this kind, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” All our blessed Lord’s sermons were so many loving calls to poor aching hearts to come and find what they needed in him. I pray that the Holy Spirit may give an effectual call to many of you tonight. It would glad the heart of the Redeemer in the skies if you would come to him for salvation, for you may come, since there is no

barrier between you and the Saviour of men. What is it keeps you back? I repeat it with tears, what is it keeps you back?

The old proverb truly saith that “actions speak louder than words,” and therefore let us review the general ways and manners of the Redeemer. You may gather that he is the most approachable of persons from the actions of his life. He was always very busy, and busy about the most important of matters, and yet he never shut the door in the face of any applicant. Her Majesty’s cabinet have to discuss most important political matters just now, but compared with the work which filled the Saviour’s hands and heart, their discussions are mere trifles. Our Master might well have claimed seclusion, but he did not. He sought it but he found none, save only at midnight, when he watched and prayed. No sort of appeal for audience did Jesus frown upon. There were certain mothers in the land, poor simple-minded women, and they took it into their heads one day that they would like to have the Master’s hands put upon the heads of their little ones. So they came, bringing their boys and girls, but some of the disciples said, “The Master must not be disturbed by children; go ye your ways, and take your children back.” But what said he? How different from his followers! he rebuked their harshness, and said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” You see he is a child’s friend. Dear young people, think of that. Jesus does not drive you away, but though he is so great and glorious that all the angels of God worship him, yet he stoops to hear the prayers and praises of little children. Seek him now, for those who seek him early shall find him. Let me tell you another story. There was a woman in the city who was a sinner. You know the meaning, the dark sad meaning of that title in her case; I need not explain that. Poor soul! Her sin had caused her to be despised and shunned by everyone, but she had been forgiven, and in gratitude she poured the precious ointment on her beloved Saviour’s feet, and then wiped them with the hairs of her head; and when the Pharisee Simon would have had her rebuked, the loving Master said, “She loves much because she has had much forgiven.” He is approachable by all, then, even by the worst; even the harlot need not fear to draw near to him — his touch can make her pure. I have noted one thing in Christ’s life, and noted it with delight. Our Lord was always preaching, and he often grew weary, as we do, and therefore he wanted a little retirement, but the multitude came breaking in upon his solitude, following him on foot when he had

sailed away to escape them; this was troublesome, and to us it would have been irritating, yet he never uttered an angry, fretful syllable. There was no rest for him, because of the eager crowd; but did he ever say, "How these people tease me; how they worry me"? No, never; his big heart made him forget himself. He was approachable to all at all hours; even his meals were disturbed, but he was gentle towards those thoughtless intruders. Not once was he harsh and repulsive. His whole life proves the truth of the prophecy, "The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench." He graciously receives the weak and the feeble ones who come to him, and sends none empty away.

6. But, if you want the crowning argument, look yonder. The man who has lived a life of service, at last dies a felon's death! Look upon his head girt with the crown of thorns! Mark well his cheeks whence they have plucked off the hair! See the spittle from those scornful mouths, staining his marred countenance! Mark the crimson rivers which are flowing from his back where they have scourged him! See his hands and his feet which are pierced with the nails, and from which ensanguined rills are flowing! Look to that face so full of anguish, listen to his cry, "I thirst, I thirst;" and as you see him there expiring, can you think that he will spurn the seeker? As you see him turn his head and say to the dying thief by his side, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," you dare not belie him so much as to deem that you may not come to him. You will outrage your reason if you start back from Jesus crucified. The cross of Christ should be the hope, the anchorage of faith. You may come, sinner, black, vile, hellish sinner, you may come and have life even as the dying thief had it when he said, "Lord, remember me."

"There is life in a look at the crucified One."

Surely, you need not be afraid to come to him who went to Calvary for sinners. Why linger? Why hesitate? Why those blushes, sobs, and tears?

“Why art thou afraid to come,
 And tell him all thy case?
 He will not pronounce thy doom,
 Nor frown thee from thy face.
 Wilt thou fear Immanuel?
 Or dread the Lamb of God,
 Who, to save thy soul from hell,
 Has shed his precious blood?”

Did I hear a whisper, did anybody say that Christ is now in heaven, and that he may have changed? Ah, groundless insinuation! Do you know what he is doing in heaven at this moment? He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. What a help that is to those who are coming to him! This repentance is the greatest want of coming sinners, and he from the skies supplies it. Moreover, “he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” His occupation in the skies is to plead for those sinners whom he redeemed with his blood, and hence he is able to save them unto the uttermost. Since he is the intercessor for souls, there is no reason why you should start back, but every reason why you should boldly come to the throne of the heavenly grace, because you have a High Priest who is passed into the heavens.

“Compell’d by bleeding love,
 Ye wandering sheep draw near;
 Christ calls you from above —
 His charming accents hear!
 Let whosoever will now come,
 In mercy’s breast there still is room.”

Here I leave this part of the subject. Some of you little know how heavily this sermon is hanging on my mind. I preach my very soul to you this day. I wish I knew how to preach so as to win some of you for my Lord, this evening; I should be glad to go even to the school of affliction if I might learn to preach more successfully. But I can do no more. May the Eternal Spirit, in answer to the prayers of his people, which I hope are going up now, be pleased to make you feel the sweet attractions of the cross of

Christ, and may you come to him, so that it may be said again tonight, "Then drew near unto him publicans and sinners."

II. I now shall proceed, with as great brevity as I can command, TO ILLUSTRATE THIS GREAT TRUTH.

I illustrate it, in the first place, by the way which Christ opens up for sinners to himself. What is the way for a sinner to come to Christ? It is simply this — the sinner, feeling his need of a Saviour, trusts himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the perplexity of my boyhood, but it is so simple now. When I was told to go to Christ, I thought "Yes, if I knew where he was, I would go to him — no matter how I wearied myself, I would trudge on till I found him." I never could understand how I could get to Christ till I understood that it is a mental coming, a spiritual coming, a coming with the mind. The coming to Jesus which saves the soul is a simple reliance upon him, and if, tonight, being sensible of your guilt, you will rely upon the atoning blood of Jesus, you have come to him, and you are saved. Is he not, then, approachable indeed, if there is so simple a way of coming? No good works, ceremonies, or experiences are demanded, a childlike faith is the royal road to Jesus.

This truth is further illustrated by the help which he gives to coming sinners, in order to bring them near to himself. He it is who first makes them coming sinners. It is his Eternal Spirit who draws them unto himself. They would not come to him of themselves, they are without desires towards him, but it is his work to cast secret silken cords around their hearts, which he draws with his strong hand, and brings them near to himself. Depend upon it, he will never refuse those whom he himself draws by his Spirit. Rest assured he will never shut the door in the face of any soul that comes to feed at the gospel banquet, moved to approach by the power of his love. He said once, "Compel them to come in," but he never said, "Shut the door in their faces and bolt them out."

I might further illustrate this to the children of God, by reminding you of the way in which you now commune with your Lord. How easy it is for you to reach his ear and his heart! A prayer, a sigh, a tear, a groan, will admit you into the King's chambers. You may be in a very sad frame of mind, but when you come to him, how soon he makes your soul like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. Dark may be your midnight, but as soon as you

draw nigh to him your night is over. “He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not.” While he acts thus with you, the sinner may very well believe that he will receive him too.

The approachableness of Christ may also be seen in the fact of his receiving the poor offerings of his people. The very holiest deeds which you and I can do for Christ are poor and faulty at the best. As I sat studying at my table last night, there was before me a little withered flower — a sprig of wall-flower — which has been lying for some weeks on my table. It comes from a very, very poor child of God, many miles away, who gets a blessing from reading my sermons, and she has nothing in the world besides to give me, but she sends me this flower, and I value it because it is a token of Christian affection and gratitude. So is it with our Master. The very best sermons that we preach, and the largest contributions we give to his treasury, are only just like that poor little withered wall-flower; but the Master puts our service in his bosom, and keeps it there, and thinks much of it because he loves us. Does not that prove how generous, how condescending, how tender he must be? Believe him to be so, ye fearful souls, and come to him.

The ordinances wear upon their forefront the impress of an ever approachable Saviour. Baptism in outward type sets forth our fellowship with him in his death, burial, and resurrection — what can be nearer than this? The Lord’s Supper in visible symbol invites us to eat his flesh and drink his blood: this reveals to us most clearly how welcome we are to the most intimate intercourse with Jesus. The heaven of heavens shall afford us yet another illustration. There are tens of thousands now in the skies who came to Jesus just as they were, in all the filth and deshabelle of the lost estate, and he received every one of them into his heart of love and arms of power. There are many thousands on earth, there are some thousands now in this Tabernacle, who can testify that they have found Jesus to be a very tender and generous friend. Now, if he has received us, why should he not receive you? Be encouraged to believe that inasmuch as he has received others he has open arms for you also.

Let me joyfully remind you that Jesus never has rejected a seeking sinner. There is not to be found in all the kingdoms of the universe a single instance of a sincere seeker after Christ being cast away, and there never shall be, for he hath not said to the seed of Jacob, “Seek ye my face in

vain,” but he has said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Beloved, if there had been a single soul cast away we should have known of it by now. It is eighteen hundred and sixty-eight years now, and if a solitary penitent had been rejected, we should have heard of it before now, for I will tell you of one who would have spread it abroad, and that is the devil. If he could get a single instance of a soul who had repented and trusted Christ, but found that Christ would have nothing to do with him, it would be a standing scandal against the cross which Satan would delight to publish. I know, poor sinners, what the devil will tell you when you are coming to Christ — he will describe Jesus as a hard master, but do you tell him he is a liar from the beginning, and a murderer, and that he is trying to murder your soul by making you swallow his poisonous lies.

III. In the third place, we come TO ENFORCE THIS TRUTH; or, as the old Puritans used to say, improve it.

The first enforcement I give is this: let those of us who are working for the Master in soul-winning, try to be like Christ in this matter, and not be, as some are apt to be, proud, stuck-up, distant, or formal. Oh, dear, dear! the lofty ministerial airs that one has seen assumed by men who ought to have been meek and lowly. What a grand set of men some of the preachers of the past age thought themselves to be! I trust those who played the archbishop have nearly all gone to heaven, but a few linger among us who use little grace and much starch. The grand divines never shook hands with anybody, except, indeed, with the deacons, and a little knot of evidently superior persons. Amongst Dissenters it was almost as bad as it is in most church congregations, where you feel that the good man, by his manner, is always saying, “I hope you know who I am, Sir; I am the rector of the parish.” Now, all that kind of stuck-upishness is altogether wrong. No man can do good in that way; and no good at all comes of assuming superiority and distance. The best teacher for boys is the man who can make himself a boy; and the best teacher for girls is the woman who can make herself a girl among girls. I often regret that I have so large a congregation; you will say, “Why?” Why, when I had a smaller congregation at Park Street, there were too many even then, but I did get a shake of the hand sometimes; but now there are so many of you that I scarcely know you, good memory as I have, and I seldom have the pleasure of shaking hands with you — I wish I did. If there is anybody in

the wide world whose good I wish to promote, it is yours; therefore I wish to be at home with you: and if ever I should affect the airs of a great man, and set myself above you all, and separate myself by proud manners from your sympathy, I hope the Lord will take me down and make me right again. We may expect souls to be saved when we do as Christ did, namely, get publicans and sinners to draw near to us. Now, that is a practical point which, though you have smiled about it, will not I hope be forgotten by you.

There is this to be said to you who are unconverted — if Jesus Christ be so approachable, oh! how I wish, how I wish that you would approach him. There are no bolts upon his doors, no barred iron gates to pass, no big dogs to keep you back. If Christ be so approachable by all needy ones, then needy one, come, and welcome. Come just now! What is it keeps you back? You think that you do not feel your need enough, or that you are not fit to come — both of which suspicions are self-righteousness in different shapes. O that you did know but your need of Jesus, in order to be able even to do so much as feel your need. You are a poor, miserable bankrupt before God, and Christ alone can enrich you. Do not talk of fitness; there is no such thing: —

“All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you;
‘Tis the Spirit’s rising beam.”

Come, then. There is such mercy to be had; there is such a hell to be escaped from; there is such a heaven to be opened for you; delay not, but believe at once. Come, come, come!

“Come, and welcome;
Come, and welcome, sinner, come!”

I stand at mercy’s door tonight, and say to every passerby, in the name of the Master, “My oxen and fatlings are killed; come, come, come to the supper!” O that you would come this very night!

Some of us are coming to the Lord’s Table to celebrate his love because we have first come to himself. I do not ask you who are not saved to come to that table — you ought not to come; you must first come to Jesus, and

then you may come to this ordinance. Meanwhile, the best thing you can do is to come to Christ, and let me ask you to remember this, that in proportion as Christ is accessible, so your guilt will be increased if you do not come to him. If it be easy to come to him, what excuse can there be for you if you refuse to accept him? I have tried to tell you what the way of salvation is. If I knew how to use better language, or even coarser language, if that would suit you, it should be alike to me if I might but touch your consciences, break your hearts, and bring you to Christ. But I protest before you that if you will not come to my Master, I can do no more. I shall be clear of your blood at the last, and in the day of judgment your ruin must be upon your own heads. But let it not be so. Jesus bids you come. O you needy ones, let your need impel you to come at once, that you may find eternal life in him.

The last word is — if Jesus be such a Saviour as we have described him, let saints and sinners join to praise him. How marvellous that our dear Lord should be so condescending to us unworthy ones as to come all the way from heaven to earth for us! Oh, matchless love that made him stoop to grief and death! Oh, unspeakable condescension, to come thus to poor sinners' hearts, bearing mercies in both his hands, and freely giving them to undeserving rebels! For this unspeakable grace let us praise him! You who are coming to his table, draw near with praises in your mouths. Come praising the condescending love in which you have participated, and which has saved you from eternal death. Even you who sit as spectators, I do trust will have you your mind filled with grateful thoughts.

“Jesus sits on Zion's hill; He receives poor sinners still.”

Blessed be his name, world without end!

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

SAVING FAITH

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, March 15, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Thy faith hath saved thee.”

— Luke 7:50; and Luke 18:42.

I do not remember that this expression is found anywhere else in the Word of God. It is found in these two places in the Gospel by Luke, but not in any other Gospel. Luke also gives us in two other places a kindred, and almost identical expression, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” This you will find used in reference to the woman whose issue of blood had been staunched (Luke 8:48), and in connection with that one of the ten lepers who returned to praise the Saviour for the cure he had received (Luke 17:19). You will find the expression, “Thy faith hath made thee whole” once in Matthew and twice in Mark, but you find it twice in Luke, and together therewith the twice repeated words of our text, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Are we wrong in supposing that the long intercourse of Luke with the apostle Paul led him not only to receive the great doctrine of justification by faith which Paul so plainly taught, and to attach to faith that high importance which Paul always did, but also to have a peculiar memory for those expressions which were used by the Saviour, in which faith was manifestly honoured to a very high degree. Albeit Luke would not have written anything which was not true for the sake of maintaining the grand doctrine so clearly taught by the apostle, yet I think his full conviction of it would help to recall to his memory more

vividly those words of the Lord Jesus from which it could be more clearly learned or illustrated. Be that as it may, we know that Luke was inspired, and that he has written neither more nor less than what the Saviour actually said, and hence we may be quite sure that the expression, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” fell from the Redeemer’s lips, and we are bound to accept it as pure unquestionable truth, and we may repeat it ourselves without fear of misleading others, or trenching upon any other truth. I mention this because the other day I heard an earnest friend say that faith did not save us, at which announcement I was rather surprised. The brother, it is true, qualified the expression, and showed that he meant to make it clear that Jesus saved us, and not our own act of faith. I agreed with what he meant, but not with what he said, for he had no right to use an expression which was in flat contradiction to the distinct declaration of the Saviour, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” We are not to strain any expression to make it mean more than the speaker intended, and it is well to guard words from being misunderstood; but on the other hand, we may not quite go so far as absolutely to negative a declaration of the Lord himself, however we may mean to qualify it. It is to be qualified if you like, but it is not to be contradicted, for there it stands, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Now we shall this morning, by God’s help, inquire *what was it that saved* the two persons whose history will come before us? It was their faith. Our second inquiry will be *what kind of faith was it* which saved them? and then thirdly, *what does this teach us in reference to faith?*

I. WHAT WAS IT THAT SAVED the two persons whose history we are about to consider?

In the penitent woman’s case, her great sins were forgiven her and she became a woman of extraordinary love: she loved much, for she had much forgiven. I feel, in thinking of her, something like an eminent father of the church who said, “This narrative is not one which I can well preach upon; I had far rather weep over it in secret.” That woman’s tears, that woman’s unbraided tresses wiping the Saviour’s feet, her coming so near to her Lord in such company, facing such proud cavillers, with such fond and resolute intent of doing honour to Jesus; verily, among those that have loved the Saviour, there hath not lived a greater than this woman who was a sinner. Yet for all that Jesus did not say to her, “Thy love hath saved thee.” Love is a golden apple of the tree of which faith is the root, and the Saviour took

care not to ascribe to the fruit that which belongs only to the root. This loving woman was also right notable for her repentance. Mark ye well those tears. Those were no tears of sentimental emotion, but a rain of holy heart-sorrow for sin. She had been a sinner and she knew it; she remembered well her multitude of iniquities, and she felt each sin deserved a tear, and there she stood weeping herself away, because she had offended her dear Lord. Yet it is not said, “Thy repentance hath saved thee.” Her being saved caused her repentance, but repentance did not save her. Sorrow for sin is an early token of grace within the heart, yet it is nowhere said, “Thy sorrow for sin hath saved thee.” She was a woman of great humility. She came behind the Lord and washed his feet, as though she felt herself only able to be a menial servant to perform works of drudgery, and to find a pleasure in so serving her Lord. Her reverence for him had reached a very high point; she regarded him as a king, and she did what has sometimes been done for monarchs by zealous subjects — she kissed the feet of her heart’s Lord, who well deserved the homage. Her loyal reverence led her to kiss the feet of her Lord, the Sovereign of her soul, but I do not find that Jesus said, “Thy humility hath saved thee;” or that he said, “Thy reverence hath saved thee;” but he put the crown upon the head of her faith, and said expressly, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

In the case of the blind man to whom my second text refers — this man was notable for his earnestness; he cried, and cried aloud, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” He was notable for his importunity, for they who would have silenced him rebuked him in vain; he cried so much the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” But I do not discover that Christ attributed his salvation to his prayers, earnest and importunate though they were. It is not written, “Thy prayers have saved thee”; it is written, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” He was a man of considerable and clear knowledge, and he had a distinct apprehension of the true character of Christ: he scorned to call him Jesus of Nazareth, as the crowd did, but he proclaimed him “Son of David,” and in the presence of that throng he dared avow his full conviction that the humble man, dressed in a peasant’s garb, who was threading his way through the throng, was none other than the royal heir of the royal line of Judah, and was indeed the fulfiller of the type of David, the expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of David. Yet I do not find that Jesus attributed his salvation to his knowledge, to his clear apprehension, or to his distinct avowal of his

Messiahship; but he said to him, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” laying the entire stress of his salvation upon his faith.

This being so in both cases, we are led to ask, what is the reason for it? What is the reason why in every case, in every man that is saved, faith is the great instrument of salvation? Is it not first because God has a right to choose what way of salvation he pleases, and he has chosen that men should be saved, not by their works, but by their faith in his dear Son? God has a right to give his mercy to whom he pleases; he has a right to give it when he pleases; he has a right to give it in what mode he pleases; and know ye this, O sons of men, that the decree of heaven is immutable, and standeth fast forever — “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” To this there shall be no exception; Jehovah has made the rule and it shall stand. If thou wouldst have salvation, “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”; but if not, salvation is utterly impossible to thee. This is the appointed way; follow it, and it leads to heaven; refuse it, and thou must perish. This is God’s sovereign determination, “He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” Jehovah’s will be done. If this be his method of grace, let us not kick against it. If he determines that faith shall save, so let it be; only, Good Master, create and increase our faith.

But while I attribute this to the sovereign choice of God, I do see, for Scripture plainly indicates it, a reason in the nature of things why faith should thus have been selected. The apostle tells us it is of faith that it might be of grace. If the condition of salvation had been either feeling or working, then, such is the depravity of our nature, that we should inevitably have attributed the merit of salvation to the working or the feeling. We should have claimed something whereof to glory. It matters not how low the condition may have been, man would have still considered that there was something required of him, that something came from him, and that, therefore, he might take some credit to himself. But no man, unless he be demented, ever claims credit for believing the truth. If he hears that which convinces him, he is convinced; and if he be persuaded, he is persuaded; but he feels that it could not well be otherwise. He attributes the effect to the truth and the influence used. He does not go about and boast because he believes what is so clear to him that he cannot doubt it. If

he did so boast of spiritual faith, all thinking men would say at once, “Wherefore dost thou boast in the fact of having believed, and especially when this believing would never have been thine if it had not been for the force of the truth which convinced thee, and the working of the Spirit of God which constrained thee to believe?” Faith is chosen by Christ to wear the crown of salvation because — let me contradict myself — it refuses to wear the crown. It was Christ that saved the penitent woman, it was Christ that saved that blind beggar, but he takes the crown from off his own head, so dear is faith to him, and he puts the diadem upon the head of faith and says, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” because he is absolutely certain that faith will never take the glory to herself, but will again lay the crown at the pierced feet, and say, “Not unto myself be glory, for thou hast done it; thou art the Saviour, and thou alone.” In order, then, to illustrate and to protect the interests of sovereign grace, and to shut out all vain glorying, God has been pleased to make the way of salvation to be by faith, and by no other means.

Nor is this all. It is clear to every one who chooses to think that in order to the renewal of the heart, which is the chief part of salvation, it is well to begin with the faith; because faith once rightly exercised becomes the mainspring of the entire nature. The man believes that he is forgiven. What then? He feels gratitude to him who has pardoned him. Feeling gratitude, it is but natural that he should hate that which displeases his Saviour, and should love intensely that which is pleasing to him who saved him, so that faith operates upon the entire nature, and becomes the instrument in the hand of the regenerating Spirit by which all the faculties of the soul are put into the right condition. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he, but his thinkings come out of his believings; if he be put right in his believings, then his understanding will operate upon his affections, and all the other powers of his manhood, and old things will pass away, all things will become new through the wonderful effect of the faith, which is of the operation of God. Faith works by love, and through love it purifies the soul, and the man becomes a new creature. See ye then the wisdom of God? He may choose what way he will, but he chooses a way which at once guards his grace from our felonious boastings, and on the other hand produces in us a holiness which other wise never would have been there.

Faith in salvation, however, is not the meritorious cause; nor is it in any sense the salvation itself. Faith saves us just as the mouth saves from hunger. If we be hungry, bread is the real cure for hunger, but still it would be right to say that eating removes hunger, seeing that the bread itself could not benefit us, unless the mouth should eat it. Faith is the soul's mouth, whereby the hunger of the heart is removed. Christ also is the brazen serpent lifted up; all the healing virtue is in him; yet no healing virtue comes out of the brazen serpent to any who will not look; so that the looking is rightly considered to be the act which saves. True, in the deepest sense it is Christ uplifted who saves, to him be all the glory; but without looking to him ye cannot be saved, so that

“There is life in a look,”

as well as life in the Saviour to whom you look. Nothing is yours until you appropriate it. If you be enriched, the thing appropriated enriches you; yet it is not incorrect but strictly right to say it is the appropriation of the blessing which makes you rich. Faith is the hand of the soul. Stretched out, it lays hold of the salvation of Christ, and so by faith we are saved. “Thy faith hath saved thee.” I need not dwell longer on that point. It is self-evident from the text that faith is the great means of salvation.

II. WHAT KIND OF FAITH WAS IT that saved these people? I will mention, first, the essential *agreements*; and then, secondly, the *differentia*, or the points in which this faith differed in its external manifestations in the two cases.

In the instances of the penitent woman and the blind beggar, their faith was fixed alone in Jesus. You cannot discover anything floating in their faith in Jesus which adulterated it; it was unmixed faith in him. the woman pressed forward to *him*, her tears fell on *him*; her ointment was for *him*; her unloosed tresses were a towel for *his*; *feet* she cared for no one else, not even for the disciples whom she respected for his sake; her whole spirit and soul were absorbed in him. He could save her; he could blot out her sins. She believed him; she did it unto him. The same was the case with that blind man. He had no thought of any ceremonies to be performed by priests; he had no idea of any medicine which might be given him by physicians. His cry was, “Son of David, Son of David.” The only notice he took of others was to disregard them, and still to cry, “Son of David,

Son of David.” “What wilt thou that *I* shall do unto thee?” was the Lord’s question, and it answered to the desire of his soul, for he knew that if anything were done it must be done by the Son of David. It is essential that our faith must rest alone on Jesus. Mix anything with Christ, and you are undone. If your faith shall stand with one foot upon the rock of his merits, and the other foot upon the sand of your own duties, it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof. Build wholly on the rock, for if so much as a corner of the edifice shall rest on anything beside, it will ensure the ruin of the whole: —

“None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”
All true faith is alike in this respect.”

The faith of these two was alike in its confession of unworthiness. What meant her standing behind? What meant her tears, her everflowing tears, but that she felt unworthy to draw near to Jesus? And what meant the beggar’s cry, “Have mercy on me?” Note the stress he lays upon it. “Have *mercy* on me.” He does not claim the cure by merit, nor ask it as a reward. To mercy he appealed. Now I care not whose faith it is, whether it be that of David in his bitter cries of the fifty-first Psalm, or whether it be that of Paul in his highest exaltation upon being without condemnation through Christ, there is always in connection with true faith a thorough and deep sense that it is mercy, mercy alone, which saves us from the wrath to come. Dear hearer, do not deceive yourself. Faith and boasting are as opposite to one another as the two poles. If you come before Christ with your righteousness in your hand, you come without faith; but if you come with faith you must also come with confession of sin, for true faith always walks hand in hand with a deep sense of guiltiness before the Most High. This is so in every case.

Their faith was alike, moreover, in defying and conquering opposition. Little do we know the inward struggles of the penitent as she crossed the threshold of Simon’s house. “He will repel thee,” the stern, cold Pharisee will say, “Get thee gone, thou strumpet; how darest thou defile the doors of honest men.” But whatever may happen she passes through the door, she comes to where the feet of the Saviour are stretched out towards the entrance as he is reclining at the table, and there she stands. Simon glanced at her: he thought the glance would wither her, but her love to Christ was

too well rooted to be withered by him. No doubt he made many signs of his displeasure, and showed that he was horrified at such a creature being anywhere near him, but she took no notice of him. Her Lord was there, and she felt safe. Timid as a dove, she trembled not while he was near; but she returned no defiant glances for Simon's haughty looks; her eyes were occupied with weeping. She did not turn aside to demand an explanation of his unkind motions, for her lips were all engrossed with kissing those dear feet. Her Lord, her Lord, was all to her. She overcame through faith in him, and held her ground, and did not leave the house till he dismissed her with "Go in peace."

It was the same with the blind man. He said, "Son of David, have mercy on me." They cried, "Hush! Why these clamours, blind beggar? His eloquence is music; do not interrupt him. Never man spake as he is speaking. Every tone rings like the harps of the angels. Hush! How darest thou spoil his discourse?" But over and above them all went up the importunate prayer, "Son of David, have mercy upon me," and he prevailed. All true faith is opposed. If thy faith be never tried it is not born of the race of the church militant. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," but it is indicated in that very declaration that there must be something to overcome, and that faith must wage war for its existence.

Once more, the faith of these two persons was alike in being openly avowed. I will not say that the avowal took the same form in both, for it did not; but still it was equally open. There is the Saviour, and there comes the weeping penitent. She loves him. Is she ashamed to say so? It may bring her reproach; it will certainly rake up the old reproaches against her, for she has been a sinner. Never mind what she has been, nor who may be present to see her. She loves her Lord, and she will show it. She will bring the ointment and she will anoint his feet, even in the presence of Pharisees, Pharisees who would say, "Is this one of the disciples of Christ? A pretty convert to boast of! A fine conquest this, for his kingdom! A harlot becomes a disciple! What next and what next?" She must have known and felt all that, but still there was no concealment. She loved her Lord, and she would avow it, and so in the very house of the Pharisee, there being no other opportunity so convenient, she comes forward, and without words, but with actions far more eloquent than words, she says, "I love him.

These tears shall show it; this ointment shall diffuse the knowledge of it, as its sweet perfume fills the room; and every lock of my hair shall be a witness that I am my Lord's and he is mine." She avowed her faith.

And so did the blind man. He did not sit there and say, "I know he is the Son of David, but I must not say it." They said, some of them contemptuously, and others indifferently, "It is Jesus of Nazareth." But he will not have it so. "Thou Son of David," saith he; and loud above their noise I hear him cry, like a herald proclaiming the King, "Son of David." Why, sirs, it seems to me he was exalted to a high office: he became the herald of the King, and proclaimed him, and this belongs to a high officer of State in our country. The blind beggar showed great decision and courage. He cried in effect, "Son of David thou art; Son of David I proclaim thee; Son of David thou shalt be proclaimed, whoever may gainsay it; only turn thine eyes and have mercy upon me." Are there any of you here who have a faith in Christ which you are ashamed of? I also am ashamed of you, and so also will Christ be ashamed of you when he cometh in the glory of his Father and all his holy angels with him. Ashamed to claim that you are honest? Then methinks you must live in bad company, where to be a rogue is to be famous; and if you are ashamed to say, "I love my Lord," methinks you are courting the friendship of Christ's enemies, and what can you be but an enemy yourself: If you love him, say it. Put on your Master's regimentals, enlist in his army, and come forward and declare, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Their faith was alike then in these four particulars, it was fixed alone on him, it was accompanied with a sense of unworthiness, it struggled and conquered opposition, and it openly declared itself before all comers.

By your patience I shall now try to show the *differences* between the same faith as to its manifestations. First, the woman's faith acted like a woman's faith. She showed tender love, and the affections are the glory and the strength of women. They were certainly such in her. Her love was intense, womanly love, and she poured it out upon the Saviour. The man's faith acted like a man's in its determination and strength. He persisted in crying, "Thou Son of David." There was as much that was masculine about his faith as there was of the feminine in the penitent's faith, and everything should be in its order and after its season. It would not have been meet for the woman's voice to be heard so boldly above the crowd; it

would have seemed out of place for a man's tears to have been falling upon the Saviour's feet. Either one or the other might have been justifiable, but they would not have been equally suitable. But now they are as suitable as they are excellent. The woman acts as a godly woman should. The man like a godly man. Never let us measure ourselves by other people. Do not, my brother, say, "I could not shed tears." Who asked thee to do so? A man's tears are mostly within, and so let them be: it is ours to use other modes of showing our love. And, my sister, do not say, "I could not act as a herald and publicly proclaim the King." I doubt not thou couldst do so if there were need, but thy tears in secret, and those wordless tokens of love to Jesus which thou are rendering, are not less acceptable because they are not the same as a man would give. Nay, they are the better because they are more suitable to thee. Do not think that all the flowers of God's garden must bloom in the same colour or shed the same perfume.

Notice next that the woman acted like a woman who had been a sinner. What more meet than tears? What more fitting place for her than at the Saviour's feet? She had been a sinner, she acts like a sinner; but the man who had been a beggar acted like a beggar. What does a beggar do but clamour for alms? Did he not beg gloriously? Never one plied the trade more earnestly than he. "Son of David," said he, "have mercy on me." I should not have liked to have seen the beggar sitting there weeping; nor to have heard the penitent woman shouting. Neither would have been natural or seemly. Faith works according to the condition, circumstances, sex, or ability of the person in whom it lives, and it best shows itself in its own form, not in an artificial manner, but in the natural outflow of the heart.

Observe, also, that the woman did not speak. There is something very beautiful in the golden silence of the woman, which was richer than her silver speech would have been. But the man was not silent; he spoke; he spoke out, and his words were excellent. I venture to say that the woman's silence spoke as powerfully as the man's voice. Of the two I think I find more eloquence in the tears bedewing, and unbraided hair wiping the Saviour's feet, than in the cry, "Son of David, have mercy on me." Yet both forms of expression were equally good, the silence best in the woman with her tears, and the speech best in the man with his confident trust in Christ. Do not think it necessary, dear friend, in order to serve, to do other people's work. What thine own hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.

If you think you can never honour Christ till you enter a pulpit, it may be just possible that you will afterwards honour him best by getting out of it as quickly as you can. There have been persons well qualified to adorn the religion of Christ with a lapstone on their lap who have thought it necessary to mount a pulpit, and in that position have been a hindrance to Christ and his gospel. Sister, there is a sphere for you; keep to it, let none push you out of it; but do not think there is nothing else to do except the work which some other woman does. God has called her, let her follow God's voice; he calls you in another direction, follow his voice thither. You will be most like that other excellent woman when you are most different from her: I mean, you will be most truly obedient to Christ, as she is, if you pursue quite another path.

There was a difference, again, in this. The woman gave — she brought her ointment. The man did the opposite — he begged. There are various ways of showing love to Christ, which are equally excellent tokens of faith. To give him of her ointment, and give him of her tears, and give him the accommodation of her hair, was well; it showed her faith, which worked by love: to give nothing, for the beggar had nothing to give, but simply to honour Christ by appealing to his bounty and his royal power, was best in the beggar. I can commend neither above the other, for I doubt not that both the penitent and the beggar gave Christ their whole heart, and what more does Jesus ask for from any one?

The thoughts of the woman and the thoughts of the beggar were different too. Her thoughts were mainly about the past, and her sins — hence her tears. To be forgiven, that was her point. His thoughts were mainly about the present, and did not so much concern his sin as his deficiency, infirmity, and inability, and so he came with different thoughts. I do not doubt that he thought of sin, as I dare say she also thought of infirmity; but in her case the thought of sin was uppermost, and hence the tears; in his the infirmity was uppermost, and hence the prayer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Do not, then, compare your experience with that of another. God is a God of wonderful variety. The painter who repeats himself in many pictures has a paucity of conception, but the master artist scarcely ever sketches the same thing a second time. There is a boundless variety in genius, and God who transcends all the genius of men, creates an infinite variety in the works of his grace. Look not, therefore, for likeness

everywhere. The woman, it is said, loved much, and she proved her love by her acts; but the man loved much too, and showed his love by actions which were most admirable, for he followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God. Yet they were different actions. I do not find that he brought any box of ointment, or anointed Christ's feet, neither do I find that she literally followed Christ in the way, though no doubt she followed him in the spirit; neither did she with a loud voice glorify God as the restored blind beggar did. There are differences of operation, but the same Lord; there are differences of capacity and differences of calling, and by this reflection I hope you will be enabled to deliver yourselves from the fault of judging one by another, and that you will look for the same faith, but not for the same development of it.

So interesting is this subject that I want you to follow me while I very rapidly sketch the woman's case, and then the man's, not mentioning the differences one by one, but allowing the two pictures to impress themselves separately upon your minds.

Observe this woman. What a strange compound she was. She was consciously unworthy, and therefore she wept, yet she drew very near to Jesus. Her acts were those of nearness and communion; she washed his feet with her tears, she wiped them with the hairs of her head, and meanwhile she kissed them again and again. "She hath not ceased," said Christ, "to kiss my feet." A sense of unworthiness, and the enjoyment of communion, were mixed together. Oh, divine faith which blends the two! She was shamefaced, yet was she very bold. She dared not look the Master in the face as yet; she approached him from behind; yet she dared face Simon, and remain in his room, whether he frowned or no. I have known some who have blushed in the face of Christ who would not have blushed before a judge, nor at the stake, if they had been dragged there for Christ's sake. Such a woman was Anne Askew, humble before her Master, but like a lioness before the foes of God.

The penitent woman wept, she was a mourner, yet she had a deep joy; I know she had, for every kiss meant joy. Every time she lifted that blessed foot, and kissed it, her heart leaped with the transport of love. Her heart knew bitterness for sin, but it knew also the sweetness of pardon. What a mixture! Faith made the compound. She was humble, never one more so; yet see how she takes upon herself to deal with the King himself.

Brethren, you and I are satisfied, and well we may be, if we may wash the saints' feet, but she was not. Oh, the courage of this woman! She will pass through the outer court, and get right to the King's own throne, and there pay her homage, in her own person, to his person, and wash the feet of the wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God. I know not that an angel ever performed such suit and service, and therefore this woman takes preeminence as having done for Jesus what no other being ever did. I have said that she was silent, and yet she spake; I will add, she was despised, but Christ set her high in honour, and made Simon, who despised her, to feel little in her presence. I will also add she was a great sinner, but she was a great saint. Her great sinnership, when pardoned, became the raw stuff out of which great saints are made by the mighty power of God. Finally she was saved by faith, so says the text, but if ever there was a case in which James could not have said, "Shall faith save thee?" and in which he must have said, "Here is one that shows her faith by her works," it was the case of this woman. There she is before you. Imitate her faith itself, though you cannot actually copy her deeds.

Now look at the man. He was blind, but he could see a great deal more than the Pharisees, who said they could see. Blind, but his inward optics saw the king in his beauty, saw the splendour of his throne, and he confessed it. He was a beggar, but he had a royal soul, and a strong sovereign determination which was not to be put down. He had the kind of mind which dwells in men who are princes among their fellows. He is not to be stopped by disciples, nay, nor by apostles. He has begun to pray, and pray he will till he obtains the boon he seeks. Note well that what he knew he avowed, what he desired he pleaded for, and what he needed he understood. "Lord, that I might receive my sight;" he was clear about his needs, and clear about the only person who could supply them. What he asked for he expected, for when he was bidden to come he evidently expected that his sight would be restored, for we are told by another Evangelist that he cast away his beggar's cloak. He felt he should never want to beg again. He was sure his eyes were about to be opened. Lastly, what he received he was grateful for, for as soon as he could walk without a guide he took Christ to be his guide, and followed him in the way, glorifying him. Look on both pictures. May you have the shadows and the lights of both, as far as they would tend to make you also another and

distinct picture by the selfsame artist, whose hand alone can produce such wonders.

III. WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US IN REFERENCE TO FAITH? It teaches us first that faith is all important. Do, I pray you, my hearers, see whether you have the precious faith, the faith of God's elect. Remember there are not many things in Scripture called precious, but there is the precious blood, and there goes with it the precious faith. If you have not that you are lost; if you have not that you are neither fit to live nor fit to die; if you have not that, your eternal destiny will be infinite despair; but if you have faith, though it be as a grain of mustard seed, you are saved. "Thy faith hath saved thee."

Learn next that the main matter in faith is the person whom you believe. I do not say *in* whom you believe. That would be true, but not quite so scriptural an expression. Paul does not say, as I hear most people quote it, "I know *in* whom I have believed." Faith believes Christ. Your faith must recognise him as a person, and come to him as a person, and rest not in his teaching merely, or his work only, but in him. "Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest." A personal Saviour for sinners! Are you resting on him alone? Do you believe him? You know the safety of the building depends mainly upon the foundation, and if the foundation be not right, you may build as you will, it will not last. Do you build, then, on Christ alone? Inquire about that as a special point.

Observe next, that we must not expect exactly the same manifestation in each convert. Let not the elders of the church expect it, let not parents require it from their children; let not anxious friends look for it; do not expect it in yourself. Biographies are very useful, but they may become a snare. I must not judge that I am not a child of God because I am not precisely like that good man whose life I have just been reading. Am I resting in Christ? Do I believe him? Then it may be the Lord's grace is striking out quite a different path for me from that which has been trodden by my brother, that it may illustrate other phases of its power, and show to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of divine love.

And, lastly, the matter which sums up all is this, if we have faith in Jesus we are saved, and ought not to talk or act as if there were any question about it. "THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE." Jesus says it. Granted,

you have faith in Christ, and it is certain that faith hath saved you. Do not, therefore, go on talking and acting and feeling as if you were not saved. I know a company of saved people who say every Sabbath, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"; but they are not miserable sinners if they are saved, and for them to use such words is to throw a slight upon the salvation which Christ has given them. If they are saved sinners they ought to be rejoicing saints. What some say others do not say, but they act as if it were so. They go about asking God to give them the mercy they have already obtained, hoping one day to receive what Christ assures them is already in their possession, talking to others as if it were a matter of question whether they were saved or not, when it cannot be a matter of question. "Thy faith hath saved thee." Fancy the poor penitent woman turning round and saying to the Saviour, "Lord, I humbly hope that it is true." There would have been neither humility nor faith in such an expression. Imagine that blind man, when Christ said, "Thy faith hath saved thee," saying "I trust that in future years it will be found to be so." It would be a belying at once of his own earnest character and of Christ's honesty of speech. If thou hast believed, thou art saved. Do not talk as if thou wert not, but now down from the willows take thy harp, and sing unto the Lord a new song. I have noticed in many prayers a tendency to avoid speaking as if facts were facts. I have heard this kind of expression, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof *we desire* to be glad." The text is, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof *we are glad*;" and if the Lord has done these great things for us our right is to be glad about them, not to go with an infamous "if" upon our lips before the Lord who cannot lie. If ye are dealing with your fellow creatures, suspect them, for they mostly deserve it; if ye are listening to their promises, doubt them, for their promises go to be broken; but if ye are dealing with your Lord and Master, never suspect him, for he is beyond suspicion; never doubt his promises, for heaven and earth and hell shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall fail. I claim for Christ that ye cast away forever all the talk which is made up of "buts," and "ifs," and "peradventures," and "I hope," and "I trust." You are in the presence of One who said, "Verily, verily," and meant what he said, who is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness."

You would not spit in his face if he were here, yet your "ifs" and "buts" are so much insult cast upon his truth. You would not scourge him, but

what do your doubts do but vex him and put him to shame? If he lies, never believe him; if he speaks the truth, never doubt him. Then shall ye know when ye have cast aside your wicked unbelief, that your faith has saved you, and ye will go in peace.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Luke
7:36-50; 18:35-43.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 18 (Ver. 1.), 536, 586.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

AN EARNEST WARNING ABOUT LUKEWARMNESS

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, July 26th, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

— Revelation 3:14-21

Scripture ever wears out. The epistle to the church of Laodicea is not an old letter which may be put into the waste basket and be forgotten; upon its page still glow the words, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” This Scripture was

not meant to instruct the Laodiceans only, it has a wider aim. The actual church of Laodicea has passed away, but other Laodiceas still exist — indeed, they are sadly multiplied in our day, and it has ever been the tendency of human nature, however inflamed with the love of God, gradually to chill into lukewarmness. The letter to the Laodiceans is above all others the epistle for the present times.

I should judge that the church at Laodicea was once in a very fervent and healthy condition. Paul wrote a letter to it which did not claim inspiration, and therefore its loss does not render the Scriptures incomplete, for Paul may have written scores of other letters besides. Paul also mentions the church at Laodicea in his letter to the church at Colosse; he was, therefore, well acquainted with it, and as he does not utter a word of censure with regard to it, we may infer that the church was at that time in a sound state. In process of time it degenerated, and cooling down from its former ardour it became careless, lax, and indifferent. Perhaps its best men were dead, perhaps its wealth seduced it into worldliness, possibly its freedom from persecution engendered carnal ease, or neglect of prayer made it gradually backslide; but in any case it declined till it was neither cold nor hot. Lest we should ever get into such a state, and lest we should be in that state now, I pray that my discourse may come with power to the hearts of all present, but especially to the consciences of the members of my own church. May God grant that it may tend to the arousing of us all.

I. My first point will be THE STATE INTO WHICH CHURCHES ARE VERY APT TO FALL. *A church may fall into a condition far other than that for which it has a repute.* It may be famous for zeal and yet be lethargic. The address of our Lord begins, “I know thy works,” as much as to say, “Nobody else knows you. Men think better of you than you deserve. You do not know yourselves, you think your works to be excellent; but I know them to be very different.” Jesus views with searching eyes all the works of his church. The public can only read reports, but Jesus sees for himself. He knows what is done, and how it is done, and why it is done. He judges a church not merely by her external activities, but by her internal pieties; he searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. He is not deceived by glitter; he tests all things, and values only that gold which will endure the fire. Our opinion of ourselves and Christ’s opinion of us may be very different, and it is a very

sad thing when it is so. It will be melancholy indeed if we stand out as a church notable for earnestness and distinguished for success, and yet are not really fervent in spirit, or eager in soul-winning. A lack of vital energy where there seems to be most strength put forth, a lack of real love to Jesus where apparently there is the greatest devotedness to him, are sad signs of fearful degeneracy. Churches are very apt to put the best goods into the window, very apt to make a fair show in the flesh, and like men of the world, they try to make a fine figure upon a very slender estate. Great reputations have often but slender foundations, and lovers of the truth lament that it should be so. Not only is it true of churches, but of every one of us as individuals, that often our reputation is in advance of our deserts. Men often live on their former credit, and trade upon their past characters, having still a name to live, though they are indeed dead. To be slandered is a dire affliction, but it is, upon the whole, a less evil than to be thought better than we are; in the one case we have a promise to comfort us, in the second we are in danger of self-conceit. I speak as unto wise men, judge ye how far this may apply to us.

The condition described in our text is, secondly, one of mournful indifference and carelessness. They were not cold, but they were not hot; they were not infidels, yet they were not earnest believers; they did not oppose the gospel, neither did they defend it; they were not working mischief, neither were they doing any great good; they were not disreputable in moral character, but they were not distinguished for holiness; they were not irreligious, but they were not enthusiastic in piety nor eminent for zeal: they were what the world calls "Moderates," they were of the Broad-church school, they were neither bigots nor Puritans, they were prudent and avoided fanaticism, respectable and averse to excitement. Good things were maintained among them, but they did not make too much of them; they had prayer-meetings, but there were few present, for they liked quiet evenings at home: when more attended the meetings they were still very dull, for they did their praying very deliberately and were afraid of being too excited. They were content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigour and zeal they considered to be vulgar. Such churches have schools, Bible-classes, preaching rooms, and all sorts of agencies; but they might as well be without them, for no energy is displayed and no good comes of them. They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the

chief quality of pillars be to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion. They have ministers who may be the angels of the churches, but if so, they have their wings closely clipped, for they do not fly very far in preaching the everlasting gospel, and they certainly are not flames of fire: they may be shining lights of eloquence, but they certainly are not burning lights of grace, setting men's hearts on fire. In such communities everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not. It makes one's flesh creep to see how sluggishly they move: I long for a knife to cut their red tape to pieces, and for a whip to lay about their shoulders to make them bestir themselves. Things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the sceptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all round. The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a Laodicean church has no notion of what that means. They are not so cold as to abandon their work, or to give up their meetings for prayer, or to reject the gospel; if they did so, then they could be convinced of their error and brought to repentance; but on the other hand they are neither hot for the truth, nor hot for conversions, nor hot for holiness, they are not fiery enough to burn the stubble of sin, nor zealous enough to make Satan angry, nor fervent enough to make a living sacrifice of themselves upon the altar of their God. They are "neither cold nor hot."

This is a horrible state, because it is one which in a church wearing a good repute renders that reputation a lie. When other churches are saying, "See how they prosper! see what they do for God!" Jesus sees that the church is doing his work in a slovenly, make-believe manner, and he considers justly that it is deceiving its friends. If the world recognizes such a people as being very distinctly an old-fashioned puritanic church, and yet there is unholy living among them, and careless walking, and a deficiency of real piety, prayer, liberality, and zeal, then the world itself is being deceived, and that too in the worst way, because it is led to judge falsely concerning Christianity, for it lays all these faults upon the back of religion, and cries out, "It is all a farce! The thing is a mere pretence! Christians are all hypocrites!" I fear there are churches of this sort. God grant we may not be numbered with them!

In this state of the church there is much self-glorification, for Laodicea said, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The members say, "Everything goes on well, what more do we want? All is right with us." This makes such a condition very hopeless, because reproofs and rebukes fall without power, where the party rebuked can reply, "We do not deserve your censures, such warnings are not meant for us." If you stand up in the pulpit and talk to sleepy churches, as I pretty frequently do, and speak very plainly, they often have the honesty to say, "There is a good deal of truth in what the man has said": but if I speak to another church, which really is half asleep, but which thinks itself to be quite a model of diligence, then the rebuke glides off like oil down a slab of marble, and no result comes of it. Men are less likely to repent when they are in the middle passage between hot and cold, than if they were in the worst extremes of sin. If they were like Saul of Tarsus, enemies of God, they might be converted; but if, like Gamaliel, they are neither opposed nor favouring, they will probably remain as they are till they die. The gospel converts a sincerely superstitious Luther, but Erasmus, with his pliant spirit, flippant, and full of levity, remains unmoved. There is more hope of warning the cold than the lukewarm.

When churches get into the condition of half-hearted faith, tolerating the gospel, but having a sweet tooth for error, they do far more mischief to their age than downright heretics.

It is harder a great deal to work for Jesus with a church which is lukewarm than it would be to begin without a church. Give me a dozen earnest spirits and put me down anywhere in London, and by God's good help we will soon cause the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice; but give me the whole lot of you, half-hearted, undecided, and unconcerned, what can I do? You will only be a drag upon a man's zeal and earnestness. Five thousand members of a church all lukewarm will be five thousand impediments, but a dozen earnest, passionate spirits, determined that Christ shall be glorified and souls won, must be more than conquerors; in their very weakness and fewness will reside capacities for being the more largely blessed of God. Better nothing than lukewarmness.

Alas, this state of lukewarmness is so congenial with human nature that it is hard to fetch men from it. Cold makes us shiver, and great heat causes us pain, but a tepid bath is comfort itself. Such a temperature suits human

nature. The world is always at peace with a lukewarm church, and such a church is always pleased with itself. Not too worldly, — no! We have our limits! There are certain amusements which of course a Christian must give up, but we will go quite up to the line, for why are we to be miserable? We are not to be so greedy as to be called miserly, but we will give as little as we can to the cause. We will not be altogether absent from the house of God, but we will go as seldom as we can. We will not altogether forsake the poor people to whom we belong, but we will also go to the world's church, so as to get admission into better society, and find fashionable friends for our children. How much of this there is abroad! Compromise is the order of the day. Thousands try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, they are for God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, truth and error, and so are “neither hot nor cold.” Do I speak somewhat strongly? Not so strongly as my Master, for he says, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” He is nauseated with such conduct, it sickens him, and he will not endure it. In an earnest, honest, fervent heart nausea is created when we fall in with men who dare not give up their profession, and yet will not live up to it; who cannot altogether forsake the work of God, but yet do it in a sluggard's manner, trifling with that which ought to be done in the best style for so good a Lord and so gracious a Saviour. Many a church has fallen into a condition of indifference, and when it does so it generally becomes the haunt of worldly professors, a refuge for people who want an easy religion, which enables them to enjoy the pleasures of sin and the honours of piety at the same time; where things are free and easy, where you are not expected to do much, or give much, or pray much, or to be very religious; where the minister is not so precise as the old school divines, a more liberal people, of broad views, free-thinking and free-acting, where there is full tolerance for sin, and no demand for vital godliness. Such churches applaud cleverness in a preacher; as for his doctrine, that is of small consequence, and his love to Christ and zeal for souls are very secondary. He is a clever fellow, and can speak well, and that suffices. This style of things is all too common, yet we are expected to hold our tongue, for the people are very respectable. The Lord grant that we may be kept clear of such respectability!

We have already said that *this condition of indifference is attended with perfect self-complacency*. The people who ought to be mourning are rejoicing, and where they should hang out signals of distress they are

flaunting the banners of triumph. "We are rich, we are adding to our numbers, enlarging our schools, and growing on all sides; we have need of nothing. What can a church require that we have not in abundance?" Yet their spiritual needs are terrible. This is a sad state for a church to be in. Spiritually poor and proud. A church crying out to God because it feels itself in a backsliding state; a church mourning its deficiency, a church pining and panting to do more for Christ, a church burning with zeal for God, and therefore quite discontented with what it has been able to do; this is the church which God will bless: but that which writes itself down as a model for others, is very probably grossly mistaken and is in a sad plight. This church, which was so rich in its own esteem, was utterly bankrupt in the sight of the Lord. It had no real joy in the Lord; it had mistaken its joy in itself for that. It had no real beauty of holiness upon it; it had mistaken its formal worship and fine building and harmonious singing for that. It had no deep understanding of the truth and no wealth of vital godliness, it had mistaken carnal wisdom and outward profession for those precious things. It was poor in secret prayer, which is the strength of any church; it was destitute of communion with Christ, which is the very life blood of religion; but it had the outward semblance of these blessings, and walked in a vain show. There are churches which are poor as Lazarus as to true religion, and yet are clothed in scarlet and fare sumptuously every day upon the mere form of godliness. Spiritual leanness exists side by side with vain-glory. Contentment as to worldly goods makes men rich, but contentment with our spiritual condition is the index of poverty.

Once more, this church of Laodicea had fallen into *a condition which had chased away its Lord*. The text tells us that Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock." That is not the position which our Lord occupies in reference to a truly flourishing church. If we are walking aright with him, he is in the midst of the church, dwelling there, and revealing himself to his people. His presence makes our worship to be full of spirituality and life; he meets his servants at the table, and there spreads them a feast upon his body and his blood; it is he who puts power and energy into all our church-action, and causes the word to sound out from our midst. True saints abide in Jesus and he in them. Oh, brethren, when the Lord is in a church, it is a happy church, a holy church, a mighty church, and a triumphant church; but we may grieve him till he will say, "I will go and return to my place,

until they acknowledge their offence and seek my face.” Oh, you that know my Lord, and have power with him, entreat him not to go away from us. He can see much about us as a people which grieves his Holy Spirit, much about any one of us to provoke him to anger. Hold him, I pray you, and do not let him go, or if he be gone, bring him again to his mother’s house, into the chamber of her that bare him, where, with holy violence, we will detain him and say, “Abide with us, for thou art life and joy, and all in all to us as a church. Ichabod is written across our house if thou be gone, for thy presence is our glory and thy absence will be our shame.” Churches may become like the temple when the glory of the Lord had left the holy place, because the image of jealousy was set up and the house was defiled. What a solemn warning is that which is contained in Jeremiah 7:12-15, “But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore I will do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.”

II. Now let us consider, secondly, THE DANGER OF SUCH A STATE. The great danger is, first, *to be rejected of Christ*. He puts it, “I will spue thee out of my mouth,” — as disgusting him, and causing him nausea. Then the church must first be in his mouth, or else it could not be spued from it. What does this mean? Churches are in Christ’s mouth in several ways, they are used by him as his testimony to the world; he speaks to the world through their lives and ministries. He does as good as say, “O sinners, if ye would see what my religion can do, see here a godly people banded together in my fear and love, walking in peace and holiness.” He speaks powerfully by them, and makes the world see and know that there is a true power in the gospel of the grace of God. But when the church becomes neither cold nor hot he does not speak by her, she is no witness for him. When God is with a church the minister’s words come out of Christ’s mouth. “Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword,” says John in the Revelation, and that “two-edged sword” is the gospel which we preach. When God is with a people they speak with divine power to the

world, but if we grow lukewarm Christ says, "Their teachers shall not profit, for I have not sent them, neither am I with them. Their word shall be as water spilt on the ground, or as the whistling of the wind." This is a dreadful thing. Better far for me to die than to be spued out of Christ's mouth.

Then he also ceases to plead for such a church. Christ's special intercession is not for all men, for he says of his people, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." I do not think Christ ever prays for the church of Rome — what would he pray for, but her total overthrow? Other churches are nearing the same fate; they are not clear in his truth or honest in obedience to his word: they follow their own devices, they are lukewarm. But there are churches for which he is pleading, for he has said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Mighty are his pleadings for those he really loves, and countless are the blessings which comes in consequence. It will be an evil day when he casts a church out of that interceding mouth, and leaves her unrepresented before the throne because he is none of his. Do you not tremble at such a prospect? Will you not ask for grace to return to your first love? I know that the Lord Jesus will never leave off praying for his own elect, but for churches as corporate bodies he may cease to pray, because they become anti-Christian, or are mere human gatherings, but not elect assemblies, such as the church of God ought to be. Now this is the danger of any church if it declines from its first ardour and becomes lukewarm. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

What is the other danger? This first comprehends all, but another evil is hinted at, — such a church will be *left to its fallen condition*, to become wretched, — that is to say, miserable, unhappy, divided, without the presence of God, and so without delight in the ways of God, lifeless, spiritless, dreary, desolate, full of schisms, devoid of grace, and I know not what beside, that may come under the term "wretched." Then the next word is "miserable," which might better be rendered "pitiable." Churches which once were a glory shall become a shame. Whereas men said, "The

Lord has done great things for them," they shall now say, "see how low they have fallen! What a change has come over the place! What emptiness and wretchedness! What a blessing rested there for so many years, but what a contrast now!" Pity will take the place of congratulation, and scorn will follow upon admiration. Then it will be "poor" in membership, poor in effort, poor in prayer, poor in gifts and graces, poor in everything. Perhaps some rich people will be left to keep up the semblance of prosperity, but all will be empty, vain, void, Christless, lifeless. Philosophy will fill the pulpit with chaff, the church will be a mass of worldliness, the congregation an assembly of vanity. Next, they will become blind, they will not see themselves as they are, they will have no eye upon the neighborhood to do it good, no eye to the coming of Christ, no eye for his glory. They will say, "We see," and yet be blind as bats. Ultimately they will become "naked," their shame will be seen by all, they will be a proverb in everybody's mouth. "Call that a church!" says one. "Is that a church of Jesus Christ?" cries a second. Those dogs that dared not open their mouths against Israel when the Lord was there will begin to howl when he is gone, and everywhere will the sound be heard, "How are the mighty fallen, how are the weapons of war broken."

In such a case as that the church will *fail of overcoming*, for it is "to him that overcometh" that a seat upon Christ's throne is promised; but that church will come short of victory. It shall be written concerning it even as of the children of Ephraim, that being armed and carrying bows they turned their backs in the day of battle. "Ye did run well," says Paul to the Galatians, "what did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Such a church had a grand opportunity, but it was not equal to the occasion, its members were born for a great work, but inasmuch as they were unfaithful, God put them aside and used other means. He raised up in their midst a flaming testimony for the gospel, and the light thereof was cast athwart the ocean, and gladdened the nations, but the people were not worthy of it, or true to it, and therefore he took the candlestick out of its place, and left them in darkness. May God prevent such an evil from coming upon *us*: but such is the danger to all churches if they degenerate into listless indifference.

III. Thirdly, I have to speak of THE REMEDIES WHICH THE LORD EMPLOY. I do earnestly pray that what I say may come home to all here, especially to every one of the members of this church, for it has come very much home to me, and caused great searching of heart in my own soul, and yet I do not think I am the least zealous among you. I beseech you to judge yourselves, that you be not judged. Do not ask me if I mean anything personal. I am personal in the most emphatic sense. I speak of *you* and to *you* in the plainest way. Some of you show plain symptoms of being lukewarm, and God forbid that I should flatter you, or be unfaithful to you. I am aiming at personality, and I earnestly want each beloved brother and sister here to take home each affectionate rebuke. And you who come from other churches, whether in America or elsewhere, you want arousing quite as much as we do, your churches are not better than ours, some of them are not so good, and I speak to you also, for you need to be stirred up to nobler things.

Note, then, the first remedy. Jesus gives a *clear discovery* as to the church's true state. He says to it — "Thou are lukewarm, thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." I rejoice to see people willing to know the truth, but most men do not wish to know it, and this is an ill sign. When a man tells you that he has not looked at his ledger, or day-book, or held a stock-taking for this twelvemonths, you know whereabouts he is, and you say to your manager, "Have you an account with him? Then keep it as close as you can." When a man dares not know the worst about his case, it is certainly a bad one, but he that is right before God is thankful to be told what he is and where he is. Now, some of you know the faults of other people, and in watching this church you have observed weak points in many places, — have you wept over them? Have you prayed over them? If not, you have not watched as you should do for the good of your brethren and sisters, and, perhaps, have allowed evils to grow which ought to have been rooted up: you have been silent when you should have kindly and earnestly spoken to the offenders, or made your own example a warning to them. Do not judge your brother, but judge yourself: if you have any severity, use it on your own conduct and heart. We must pray the Lord to use this remedy, and make us know just where we are. We shall never get right as long as we are confident that we are so already. Self-complacency is the death of repentance.

Our Lord's next remedy is *gracious counsel*. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." Does not that strike you as being very like the passage in Isaiah, "Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price?" It is so, and it teaches us that one remedy for lukewarmness is to begin again just as we began at first. We were at a high temperature at our first conversion. What joy, what peace, what delight, what comfort, what enthusiasm we had when first we knew the Lord! We bought gold of him then for nothing, let us go and buy again at the same price.

If religion has not been genuine with us till now, or if we have been adding to it great lumps of shining stuff which we thought was gold and was not, let us now go to the heavenly mint and buy gold tried in the fire, that we may be really rich. Come, let us begin again, each one of us. Inasmuch as we may have thought we were clothed and yet we were naked, let us hasten to him again, and at his own price, which is no price, procure the robe which he has wrought of his own righteousness, and that goodly raiment of his Spirit, which will clothe us with the beauty of the Lord. If, moreover, we have come to be rather dim in the eye, and no longer look up to God and see his face, and have no bright vision of the glory to be revealed, and cannot look on sinners with weeping eyes, as we once did, let us go to Jesus for the eye-salve, just as we went when we were stone blind at first, and the Lord will open our eyes again, and we shall behold him in clear vision as in days gone by. The word from Jesus is, "Come near to me, I pray you, my brethren. If you have wandered from me, return; if you have been cold to me I am not cold to you, my heart is the same to you as ever, come back to me, my brethren. Confess your evil deeds, receive my forgiveness, and henceforth let your hearts burn towards me, for I love you still and will supply all your needs." That is good counsel, let us take it.

Now comes a third remedy, sharp and cutting, but sent in love, namely, *rebukes and chastenings*. Christ will have his favoured church walk with great care, and if she will not follow him fully by being shown wherein she has erred, and will not repent when kindly counselled, he then betakes himself to some sharper means. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." The word here used for "love" is a very choice one; it is one which signifies an intense personal affection. Now, there are some churches which Christ loves very specially, favouring them above others, doing

more for them than for others, and giving them more prosperity; they are the darlings of his heart, his Benjamins. Now, it is a very solemn thing to be dearly loved by God. It is a privilege to be coveted, but mark you, the man who is so honoured occupies a position of great delicacy. The Lord thy God is a jealous God, and he is most jealous where he shows most love. The Lord lets some men escape scot free for awhile after doing many evil things, but if they had been his own elect he would have visited them with stripes long before. He is very jealous of those whom he has chosen to lean upon his bosom and to be his familiar friends. Your servant may do many things which could not be thought of by your child or your wife; and so is it with many who profess to be servants of God — they live a very lax life, and they do not seem to be chastened for it, but if they were the Lord's own peculiarly beloved ones he would not endure such conduct from them. Now mark this, if the Lord exalts a church, and gives it a special blessing, he expects more of it, more care of his honour, and more zeal for his glory than he does of any other church; and when he does not find it, what will happen? Why, because of his very love he will rebuke it with hard sermons, sharp words, and sore smitings of conscience. If these do not arouse it he will take down the rod and deal out chastenings. Do you know how the Lord chastens churches? Paul says, "For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep." Bodily sickness is often sent in discipline upon churches, and losses, and crosses, and troubles are sent among the members, and sometimes leanness in the pulpit, breakings out of heresy and divisions in the pew, and lack of success in all church work. All these are smitings with the rod. It is very sad, but sometimes that rod does not fall on that part of the church which does the wrong. Sometimes God may take the best in the church, and chasten them for the wrong of others. You say, "How can that be right?" Why, because they are the kind of people who will be most benefited by it. If a vine wants the knife, it is not the branch that bears very little fruit which is trimmed, but the branch which bears much fruit is purged because it is worth purging. In their case the chastening is a blessing and a token of love. Sorrow is often brought upon Christians by the sins of their fellow-members, and many an aching heart there is in this world that I know of, of brethren and sisters who love the Lord and want to see souls converted, but they can only sigh and cry because nothing is done. Perhaps they have a minister who does not believe the gospel, and they have fellow-members who do not care whether

the minister believes it or not, they are all asleep together except those few zealous souls who besiege the throne of grace day and night, and they are the ones who bear the burden of the lukewarm church. Oh, if the chastening comes here, whoever bears it, may the whole body be the better for it, and may we never rest till the church begins to glow with the sacred fire of God, and boil with enthusiastic desire for his glory.

The last remedy, however, is the best of all to my mind. I love it best and desire to make it my food when it is not my medicine. The best remedy for backsliding churches is *more communion with Christ*. "Behold," saith he, "I stand at the door and knock." I have known this text preached upon to sinners numbers of times as though Christ knocked at their door and they had to open it, and so on. The preacher has never managed to keep to free grace for this reason, that the text was not meant to be so used, and if men will ride a text the wrong way, it will not go. This text belongs to the church of God, not to the unconverted. It is addressed to the Laodicean church. There is Christ outside the church, driven there by her unkindness, but he has not gone far away, he loves his church too much to leave her altogether, he longs to come back, and therefore he waits at the doorpost. He knows that the church will never be restored till he comes back, and he desires to bless her, and so he stands waiting, knocking and knocking, again and again; he does not merely knock once, but he *stands* knocking by earnest sermons, by providences, by impressions upon the conscience, by the quickenings of his Holy Spirit; and while he knocks he speaks, he uses all means to awaken his church. Most condescendingly and graciously does he do this, for having threatened to spue her out of his mouth, he might have said, "I will get me gone; and I will never come back again to thee," that would have been natural and just; but how gracious he is when, having expressed his disgust he says, "Disgusted as I am with your condition, I do not wish to leave you; I have taken my presence from you, but I love you, and therefore I knock at your door, and wish to be received into your heart. I will not force myself upon you, I want you voluntarily to open the door to me." Christ's presence in a church is always a very tender thing. He never is there against the will of the church, it cannot be, for he lives in his people's wills and hearts, and "worketh in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure." He does not break bolt and bar and come in as he often does into a sinner's heart, carrying the soul by storm, because the man is dead in sin, and Christ must do it all, or the sinner will perish; but

he is here speaking to living men and women, who ought also to be loving men and women, and he says, "I wish to be among you, open the door to me." We ought to open the door at once, and say, "Come in, good Lord, we grieve to think we should ever have put thee outside that door at all."

And then see what promises he gives. He says he will come and sup with us. Now, in the East, the supper was the best meal of the day, it was the same as our dinner; so that we may say that Christ will come and dine with us. He will give us a rich feast, for he himself is the daintiest and most plenteous of all feasts for perishing souls. He will come and sup with us, that is, we shall be the host and entertain him: but then he adds, "and he with me," that is, he will be the host and guest by turns. We will give him of our best, but poor fare is that, too poor for him, and yet he will partake of it. Then he shall be host, and we will be guest, and oh, how we will feast on what he gives! Christ comes, and brings the supper with him, and all we do is to find the room. The Master says to us, "Where is the guest chamber?" and then he makes ready and spreads his royal table. Now, if these be the terms on which we are to have a feast together, we will most willingly fling open the doors of our hearts and say, "Come in, good Lord." He says to you, "Children, have you any meat?" and if you are obliged to say, "No, Lord," he will come in unto you none the less readily, for there are the fish, the net is ready to break, it is so full, and here are more upon the coals ready. I warrant you, if we sup with him, we shall be lukewarm no longer. The men who live where Jesus is soon feel their hearts burning. It is said of a piece of scented clay by the old Persian moralist that the clay was taken up and questioned. "How camest thou to smell so sweetly, being nothing but common clay?" and it replied, "I laid for many a year in the sweet society of a rose, until at last I drank in its perfume"; and we may say to every warm-hearted Christian, "How camest thou so warm?" and his answer will be, "My heart bubbleth up with a good matter, for I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. I have been with Jesus, and I have learned of him."

Now, brethren and sisters, what can I say to move you to take this last medicine? I can only say, take it, not only because of the good it will do you, but because of the sweetness of it. I have heard say of some persons that they were pledged not to take wine except as a medicine, but then they were very pleased when they were ill: and so if this be the medicine,

“I will come and sup with him, and he with me,” we may willingly confess our need of so delicious a remedy. Need I press it on you? May I not rather urge each brother as soon as he gets home today to see whether he cannot enter into fellowship with Jesus? and may the Spirit of God help him!

This is my closing word, there is something for us to do in this matter. We must examine ourselves, and we must confess the fault if we have declined in grace. An then we must not talk about setting the church right, we must pray for grace each one for himself, for the text does not say, “If the church will open the door,” but “If *any man* hear my voice and open the door.” It must be done by individuals: the church will only get right by each man getting right. Oh, that we might get back into an earnest zeal for our Lord’s love and service, and we shall only do so by listening to his rebukes, and then falling into his arms, clasping him once again, and saying, “My Lord and my God.” That healed Thomas, did it not? Putting his fingers into the print of the nails, putting his hand into the side, that cured him. Poor, unbelieving, staggering Thomas only had to do that and he became one of the strongest of believers, and said, “My Lord and my God.” You will love your Lord till your soul is as coals of juniper if you will daily commune with him. Come close to him, and once getting close to him, never go away from him any more. The Lord bless you, dear brethren, the Lord bless you in this thing.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Revelation 3.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 184, 787, 992.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, September 6th, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Christ died for the ungodly.”

— Romans 5:6

In this verse the human race is described as a sick man, whose disease is so far advanced that he is altogether without strength: no power remains in his system to throw off his mortal malady, nor does he desire to do so; he could not save himself from his disease if he would, and would not if he could. I have no doubt that the apostle had in his eye the description of the helpless infant given by the prophet Ezekiel; it was an infant — an infant newly born — an infant deserted by its mother before the necessary offices of tenderness had been performed; left unwashed, unclothed, unfed, a prey to certain death under the most painful circumstances, forlorn, abandoned, hopeless. Our race is like the nation of Israel, its whole head is sick, and its whole heart faint. Such, unconverted men, are you! Only there is this darker shade in your picture, that your condition is not only your calamity, but your fault. In other diseases men are grieved at their sickness, but this is the worst feature in your case, that you love the evil which is destroying you. In addition to the pity which your case demands, no little blame must be measured out to you: you are without will for that which is good, your “cannot” means “will not,” your inability is not physical but moral, not that of the blind who cannot see for want of eyes, but of the willingly ignorant who refuse to look.

While man is in this condition Jesus interposes for his salvation. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”; “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” according to “his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” The pith of my sermon will be an endeavour to declare that the reason of Christ’s dying for us did not lie in our excellence; but where sin abounded grace did much more abound, for the persons for whom Jesus died were viewed by him as the reverse of good, and he came into the world to save those who are guilty before God, or, in the words of our text, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

Now to our business. We shall dwell first upon *the fact* — “Christ died for the ungodly”; then we shall consider the *fair inferences* therefrom; and, thirdly, proceed to think and speak of the proclamation of this simple but wondrous truth.

First, here is THE FACT — “*Christ died for the ungodly.*” Never did the human ear listen to a more astounding and yet cheering truth. Angels desire to look into it, and if men were wise they would ponder it night and day. Jesus, the Son of God, himself God over all, the infinitely glorious One, Creator of heaven and earth, out of love to me stooped to become a man and die. Christ, the thrice holy God, the pure-hearted man, in whom there was no sin and could be none, espoused the cause of the wicked. Jesus, whose doctrine makes deadly war on sin, whose Spirit is the destroyer of evil, whose whole self abhors iniquity, whose second advent will prove his indignation against transgression, yet undertook the cause of the impious, and even unto death pursued their salvation. The Christ of God, though he had no part or lot in the fall and the sin which has arisen out of it, has died to redeem us from its penalty, and, like the psalmist, he can cry, “Then I restored that which I took not away.” Let all holy beings judge whether this is not the miracle of miracles!

Christ, the name given to our Lord, is an expressive word; it means “Anointed One,” and indicates that he was sent upon a divine errand, commissioned by supreme authority. The Lord Jehovah said of old, “*I have laid* help upon one that is mighty, *I have exalted* one chosen out of the people”; and again, “*I have given him* as a covenant to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” Jesus was both set apart to this work, and qualified for it by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. He is no

unauthorised saviour, no amateur deliverer, but an ambassador clothed with unbounded power from the great King, a Redeemer with full credentials from the Father. It is this ordained and appointed Saviour who has “died for the ungodly.” Remember this, ye ungodly! Consider well who it was that came to lay down his life for such as you are.

The text says Christ *died*. He did a great deal besides dying, but the crowning act of his career of love for the ungodly, and that which rendered all the rest available to them, was his death for them. He actually gave up the ghost, not in fiction, but in fact. He laid down his life for us, breathing out his soul, even as other men do when they expire. That it might be indisputably clear that he was really dead, his heart was pierced with the soldier’s spear, and forthwith came there out blood and water. The Roman governor would not have allowed the body to be removed from the cross had he not been duly certified that Jesus was indeed dead. His relatives and friends who wrapped him in linen and laid him in Joseph’s tomb, were sorrowfully sure that all that lay before them was a corpse. The Christ really died, and in saying that, we mean that he suffered all the pangs incident to death; only he endured much more and worse, for his was a death of peculiar pain and shame, and was not only attended by the forsaking of man, but by the departure of his God. That cry, “My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” was the innermost blackness of the thick darkness of death.

Our Lord’s death was penal, inflicted upon him by divine justice; and rightly so, for on him lay our iniquities, and therefore on him must lay the suffering. “It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” He died under circumstances which made his death most terrible. Condemned to a felon’s gibbet, he was crucified amid a mob of jesters, with few sympathising eyes to gaze upon him; he bore the gaze of malice and the glance of scorn; he was hooted and jeered by a ribald throng, who were cruelly inventive in their taunts and blasphemies. There he hung, bleeding from many wounds, exposed to the sun, burning with fever, and devoured with thirst, under every circumstance of contumely, pain, and utter wretchedness; his death was of all deaths the most deadly death, and emphatically “Christ died.”

But the pith of the text comes here, that “Christ died *for the ungodly*”; not for the righteous, not for the reverent and devout, but for the *ungodly*.

Look at the original word, and you will find that it has the meaning of “impious, irreligious, and wicked.” Our translation is by no means too strong, but scarcely expressive enough. To be ungodly, or godless, is to be in a dreadful state, but as use has softened the expression, perhaps you will see the sense more clearly if I read it, “Christ died for the *impious*,” for those who have no reverence for God. Christ died for the godless, who, having cast off God, cast off with him all love for that which is right. I do not know a word that could more fitly describe the most irreligious of mankind than the original word in this place, and I believe it is used on purpose by the Spirit of God to convey to us the truth, which we are always slow to receive, that Christ did not die because men were good, or would be good, but died for them as ungodly — or, in other words, “he came to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Observe, then, that when the Son of God determined to die for men, he viewed them as ungodly, and far from God by wicked works. In casting his eye over our race he did not say, “Here and there I see spirits of nobler mould, pure, truthful, truth-seeking, brave, disinterested, and just; and therefore, because of these choice ones, I will die for this fallen race.” No; but looking on them all, he whose judgment is infallible returned this verdict, “They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Putting them down at that estimate, and nothing better, Christ died for them. He did not please himself with some rosy dream of a superior race yet to come, when the age of iron should give place to the age of gold, — some halcyon period of human development, in which civilisation would banish crime, and wisdom would conduct man back to God. Full well he knew that, left to itself, the world would grow worse and worse, and that by its very wisdom it would darken its own eyes. It was not because a golden age would come by natural progress, but just because such a thing was impossible, unless he died to procure it, that Jesus died for a race which, apart from him, could only develop into deeper damnation. Jesus viewed us as we really were, not as our pride fancies us to be; he saw us to be without God, enemies of our own Creator, dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt, and set on mischief, and even in our occasional cry for good, searching for it with blinded judgment and prejudiced heart, so that we put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He saw that in us was no good thing, but every possible evil, so that we were lost, — utterly, helplessly,

hopelessly lost apart from him: yet viewing us as in that graceless and Godless plight and condition, he died for us.

I would have you remember that the view under which Jesus beheld us was not only the true one, but, for us, the kindly one; because had it been written that Christ died for the better sort, then each troubled spirit would have inferred “he died not for me.” Had the merit of his death been the perquisite of honesty, where would have been the dying thief? If of chastity, where the woman that loved much? If of courageous fidelity, how would it have fared with the apostles, for they all forsook him and fled? There are times when the bravest man trembles lest he should be found a coward, the most disinterested frets about the selfishness of his heart, and the most pure is staggered by his own impurity; where, then, would have been hope for one of us, if the gospel had been only another form of law, and the benefits of the cross had been reserved as the rewards of virtue? The gospel does not come to us as a premium for virtue, but it presents us with forgiveness for sin. It is not a reward for health, but a medicine for sickness. Therefore, to meet all cases, it puts us down at our worst, and, like the good Samaritan with the wounded traveller, it comes to us where we are. “Christ died for the impious” is a great net which takes in even the leviathan sinner; and of all the creeping sinners innumerable which swarm the sea of sin, there is not one kind which this great net does not encompass.

Let us note well that in this condition lay the need of our race that Christ should die. I do not see how it could have been written “Christ died for the *good*.” To what end for the good? Why need they his death? If men are perfect, does God need to be reconciled to them? Was he ever opposed to holy beings? Impossible! On the other hand, were the good ever the enemies of God? If such there be are they not of necessity his friends? If man be by nature just with God, to what end should the Saviour die? “*The just for the unjust*” I can understand; but the “just dying for the just” were a double injustice — an injustice that the just should be punished at all, and another injustice that the just should be punished for them. Oh no! If Christ died, it must be because there was a penalty to be paid for sin committed, hence he must have died for those who had committed the sin. If Christ died, it must have been because “a fountain filled with blood” was necessary for the cleansing away of heinous stains; hence, it must have

been for those who are defiled. Suppose there should be found anywhere in this world an unfallen man — perfectly innocent of all actual sin, and free from any tendency to it, there would be a superfluity of cruelty in the crucifixion of the innocent Christ for such an individual. What need has he that Christ should die for him, when he has in his own innocence the right to live? If there be found beneath the copes of heaven an individual who, notwithstanding some former slips and flaws, can yet, by future diligence, completely justify himself before God, then it is clear that there is no need for Christ to die for him. I would not insult him by telling him that Christ died for him, for he would reply to me, “Why should he? Cannot I make myself just without him?” In the very nature of things it must be so, that if Christ Jesus dies he must die for the ungodly. Such agonies as his would not have been endured had there not been a cause, and what cause could there have been but sin?

Some have said that Jesus died as our example; but that is not altogether true. Christ’s death is not absolutely an example for men, it was a march into a region of which he said, “Ye cannot follow me now.” His life was our example, but not his death in all respects, for we are by no means bound to surrender ourselves voluntarily to our enemies as he did, but when persecuted in one city we are bidden to flee to another. To be willing to die for the truth is a most Christly thing, and in that Jesus is our example; but into the winepress which he trod it is not ours to enter, the voluntary element which was peculiar to his death renders it inimitable. He said, “I lay down my life of myself; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.” One word of his would have delivered him from his foes; he had but to say “Begone!” and the Roman guards must have fled like chaff before the wind. He died because he willed to do so; of his own accord he yielded up his spirit to the Father. It must have been as an atonement for the guilty; it could not have been as an example, for no man is bound voluntarily to die. Both the dictates of nature, and the command of the law, require us to preserve our lives. “Thou shalt not kill” means “Thou shalt not voluntarily give up thine own life any more than take the life of another.” Jesus stood in a special position, and therefore he died; but his example would have been complete enough without his death, had it not been for the peculiar office which he had undertaken. We may fairly conclude that Christ died for men who needed such a death; and, as the

good did not need it for an example — and in fact it is not an example to them — he must have died for the ungodly.

The sum of our text is this — all the benefits resulting from the Redeemer's passion, and from all the works that followed upon it, are for those who by nature are ungodly. His gospel is that sinners believing in him are saved. His sacrifice has put away sin from all who trust him, and, therefore, it was offered for those who had sin upon them before. "He rose again for our justification," but certainly not for the justification of those who can be justified by their own works. He ascended on high, and we are told that he "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also." He lives to intercede, and Isaiah tells us that "He made intercession for the transgressors." The aim of his death, resurrection, ascension, and eternal life, is towards the sinful sons of men. His death has brought pardon, but it cannot be pardon for those who have no sin — pardon is only for the guilty. He is exalted on high "to give repentance," but surely not to give repentance to those who have never sinned, and have nothing to repent of. Repentance and remission both imply previous guilt in those who receive them: unless, then, these gifts of the exalted Saviour are mere shams and superfluities, they must be meant for the really guilty. From his side there flowed out water as well as blood — the water is intended to cleanse polluted nature, then certainly not the nature of the sinless, but the nature of the impure; and so both blood and water flowed for sinners who need the double purification. To-day the Holy Spirit regenerates men as the result of the Redeemer's death; and who can be regenerated but those who need a new heart and a right spirit? To regenerate the already pure and innocent were ridiculous; regeneration is a work which creates life where there was formerly death, gives a heart of flesh to those whose hearts were originally stone, and implants the love of holiness where sin once had sole dominion. Conversion is also another gift, which comes through his death, but does he turn those whose faces are already in the right direction? It cannot be. He converts the sinner from the error of his ways, he turns the disobedient into the right way, he leads back the stray sheep to the fold. Adoption is another gift which comes to us by the cross. Does the Lord adopt those who are already his sons by nature? If children already, what room is there for adoption? No; but the grand act of divine love is that which takes those who are "children of wrath even as others," and by

sovereign grace puts them among the children, and makes them “heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.”

To-day I see the Good Shepherd in all the energy of his mighty love, going forth into the dreadful wilderness. For whom is he gone forth? For the ninety and nine who feed at home? No, but into the desert his love sends him, over hill and dale, to seek the one lost sheep which has gone astray. Behold, I see him arousing his church, like a good housewife, to cleanse her house. With the besom of the law she sweeps, and with the candle of the word she searches, and what for? For those bright new coined pieces fresh from the mint, which glitter safely in her purse? Assuredly not, but for that lost piece which has rolled away into the dust, and lies hidden in the dark corner. And lo! grandest of all visions! I see the Eternal Father, himself, in the infinity of his love, going forth in haste to meet a returning child. And whom does he go to meet? The elder brother returning from the field, bringing his sheaves with him? An Esau, who has brought him savoury meat such as his soul loveth? A Joseph whose godly life has made him Lord over all Egypt? Nay, the Father leaves his home to meet a returning prodigal, who has companied with harlots, and grovelled among swine, who comes back to him in disgraceful rags, and disgusting filthiness! It is on a sinner’s neck that the Father weeps; it is on a guilty cheek that he sets his kisses; it is for an unworthy one that the fatted calf is killed, and the best robe is worn, and the house is made merry with music and with dancing. Yes, tell it, and let it ring round earth and heaven, Christ died for the ungodly. Mercy seeks the guilty, grace has to do with the impious, the irreligious and the wicked. The physician has not come to heal the healthy, but to heal the sick. The great philanthropist has not come to bless the rich and the great, but the captive and the prisoner. He puts down the mighty from their seats, for he is a stern leveller, but he has come to lift the beggar from the dunghill, and to set him among princes, even the princes of his people. Sing ye, then, with the holy Virgin, and let your song be loud and sweet, — “He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” O ye guilty ones, believe in him and live.

II. Let us now consider THE PLAIN INFERENCES FROM THIS FACT.

Let me have your hearts as well as your ears, especially those of you who are not yet saved, for I desire you to be blessed by the truths uttered; and oh, may the Spirit of God cause it to be so. It is clear that those of you who are ungodly — and if you are unconverted you are that — *are in great danger*. Jesus would not interpose his life and bear the bloody sweat and crown of thorns, and nails, and spear, and scorn unmitigated, and death itself, if there were not solemn need and imminent peril. There is danger, solemn danger, for you. You are under the wrath of God already, and you will soon die, and then, as surely as you live, you will be lost, and lost forever; as certain as the righteous will enter into everlasting life, you will be driven into everlasting punishment. The cross is the danger signal to you, it warns you that if God spared not his only Son, he will not spare you. It is the lighthouse set on the rocks of sin to warn you that swift and sure destruction awaits you if you continue to rebel against the Lord. Hell is an awful place, or Jesus had not needed to suffer such infinite agonies to save us from it.

It is also fairly to be inferred that *out of this danger only Christ can deliver the ungodly, and he only through his death*. If a less price than that of the life of the Son of God could have redeemed men, he would have been spared. When a country is at war, and you see a mother give up her only boy to fight her country's battles — her only well-beloved, blameless son — you know that the battle must be raging very fiercely, and that the country is in stern danger: for, if she could find a substitute for him, though she gave all her wealth, she would lavish it freely to spare her darling. If she were certain that in his heart a bullet would find its target, she must have strong love for her country, and her country must be in dire necessity ere she would bid him go. If, then, "God spared not his Son, but freely delivered him up for us all," there must have been a dread necessity for it. It must have stood thus: die he, or the sinner must, or justice must; and since justice could not, and the Father desired that the sinner should not, then Christ *must*; and so he did. Oh, miracle of love! I tell you, sinners, you cannot help yourselves, nor can all the priests of Rome or Oxford help you, let them perform their antics as they may; Jesus alone can save, and that only by his death. There on the bloody tree hangs all man's hope; if you enter heaven it must be by force of the incarnate God's bleeding out his life for you. You are in such peril that only the pierced

hand can lift you out of it. Look to him, at once, I pray you, ere the proud waters go over your soul.

Then let it be noticed — and this is the point I want constantly to keep before your view — *that Jesus died out of pure pity*. He must have died out of the most gratuitous benevolence to the undeserving, because the character of those for whom he died could not have attracted him, but must have been repulsive to his holy soul. The impious, the godless — can Christ love these for their character? No, he loved them notwithstanding their offences, loved them as creatures fallen and miserable, loved them according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, from pity, and not from admiration. Viewing them as ungodly, yet he loved them. This is extraordinary love! I do not wonder that some persons are loved by others, for they wear a potent charm in their countenances, their ways are winsome, and their characters charm you into affection; “but God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” He looked at us, and there was not a solitary beauty spot upon us: we were covered with “wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores,” distortions, defilements, and pollutions; and yet, for all that, Jesus loved us. He loved us because he would love us; because his heart was full of pity, and he could not let us perish. Pity moved him to seek the most needy objects that his love might display its utmost ability in lifting men from the lowest degradation, and putting them in the highest position of holiness and honour.

Observe another inference. If Christ died for the ungodly, *this fact leaves the ungodly no excuse if they do not come to him*, and believe in him unto salvation. Had it been otherwise they might have pleaded, “We are not fit to come.” But you are ungodly, and Christ died for the ungodly, why not for you? I hear the reply, “But I have been so very vile.” Yes, you have been impious, but your sin is not worse than this word ungodly will compass. Christ died for those who were wicked, thoroughly wicked. The Greek word is so expressive that it must take in your case, however wrongly you have acted. “But I cannot believe that Christ died for such as I am,” says one. Then, sir, mark! I hold you to your words, and charge you with contradicting the Eternal God to his teeth, and making him a liar. Your statement gives God the lie. The Lord declares that “Christ died for the ungodly,” and you say he did not, what is that but to make God a liar?

How can you expect mercy if you persist in such proud unbelief? Believe the divine revelation. Close in at once with the gospel. Forsake your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall surely live. The fact that Christ died for the ungodly renders self-righteousness a folly. Why need a man pretend that he is good if “Christ died for the ungodly?” We have an orphanage, and the qualification for our orphanage is that the child for whom admission is sought shall be utterly destitute. I will suppose a widow trying to show to me and my fellow trustees that her boy is a fitting object for the charity; will she tell us that her child has a rich uncle? Will she enlarge upon her own capacities for earning a living? Why, this would be to argue against herself, and she is much too wise for that, I warrant you, for she knows that any such statements would damage rather than serve her cause. So, sinner, do not pretend to be righteous, do not dream that you are better than others, for that is to argue against yourself. Prove that you are not by nature ungodly, and you prove yourself to be one for whom Jesus did not die. Jesus comes to make the ungodly godly, and the sinful holy, but the raw material upon which he works is described in the text not by its goodness but by its badness; it is for the ungodly that Jesus died. “Oh, but if I felt!” Felt what? Felt something which would make you better? Then you would not so clearly come under the description here given. If you are destitute of good feelings, and thoughts, and hopes, and emotions, you are ungodly, and “Christ died for the ungodly.” Believe in him and you shall be saved from that ungodliness.

“Well,” cries out some Pharisaic moralist, “this is dangerous doctrine.” How so? Would it be dangerous doctrine to say that physicians exercise their skill to cure sick people and not healthy ones? Would that encourage sickness? Would that discourage health? You know better; you know that to inform the sick of a physician who can heal them is one of the best means for promoting their cure. If ungodly and impious men would take heart and run to the Saviour, and by him become cured of impiety and ungodliness, would not that be a good thing? Jesus has come to make the ungodly godly, the impious pious, the wicked obedient, and the dishonest upright. He has not come to save them *in* their sins, but *from* their sins; and this is the best of news for those who are diseased with sin. Self-righteousness is a folly, and despair is a crime, since Christ died for the ungodly. None are excluded hence but those who do themselves

exclude; this great gate is set so wide open that the very worst of men may enter, and you, dear hearer, may enter now.

I think it is also very evident from our text that when they are saved, *the converted find no ground of boasting*; for when their hearts are renewed and made to love God they cannot say, “See how good I am,” because they were not so by nature; they were ungodly, and, as such, Christ died for them. Whatever goodness there may be in them after conversion they ascribe it to the grace of God, since by nature they were alienated from God, and far removed from righteousness. If the truth of natural depravity be but known and felt, free grace must be believed in, and then all glorying is at an end.

This will also keep the saved ones from thinking lightly of sin. If God had forgiven sinners without an atonement they might have thought little of transgression, but now that pardon comes to them through the bitter griefs of their Redeemer they cannot but see it to be an exceeding great evil. When we look to Jesus dying on the cross we end our dalliance with sin, and utterly abhor the cause of so great suffering to so dear a Saviour. Every wound of Jesus is an argument against sin. We never know the full evil of our iniquities till we see what it cost the Redeemer to put them away.

Salvation by the death of Christ is the strongest conceivable promoter of all the things which are pure, honest, lovely, and of good report. It makes sin so loathsome that the saved one cannot take up even its name without dread. “I will take away the name of Baali out of thy mouth.” He looks upon it as we should regard a knife rusted with gore, wherewith some villain had killed our mother, our wife, or child. Could we play with it? Could we bear it about our persons or endure it in our sight? No, accursed thing! stained with the heart’s blood of my beloved, I would fain fling thee into the bottomless abyss! Sin is that dagger which stabbed the Saviour’s heart, and henceforth it must be the abomination of every man who has been redeemed by the atoning sacrifice.

To close this point. Christ’s death for the ungodly is *the grandest argument to make the ungodly love him when they are saved*. To love Christ is the mainspring of obedience in men — how shall men be led to love him? If you would grow love, you must sow love. Go, then; and let men know the love of Christ to sinners, and they will, by grace, be moved

to love him in return. No doubt all of us require to know the threatenings of the wrath of God; but that which soonest touches my heart is Christ's free love to an unworthy one like myself. When my sins seem blackest to me, and yet I know that through Christ's death I am forgiven, this blest assurance melts me down.

“If thou hadst bid thy thunders roll,
And lightnings flash, to blast my soul.
I still had stubborn been;
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Saviour I have view'd,
And now I hate my sin.”

I have heard of a soldier who had been put in prison for drunkenness and insubordination several times and he had been also flogged, but nothing improved him. At last he was taken in the commission of another offence, and brought before the commanding officer, who said to him, “My man, I have tried everything in the martial code with you, except shooting you; you have been imprisoned and whipped, but nothing has changed you. I am determined to try something else with you. You have caused us a great deal of trouble and anxiety, and you seem resolved to do so still; I shall, therefore, change my plans with you, and I shall neither fine you, flog you, nor imprison you; I will see what kindness will do, and therefore I fully and freely forgive you.” The man burst into tears, for he reckoned on a round number of lashes, and had steeled himself to bear them, but when he found he was to be forgiven, and set free, he said, “Sir, you shall not have to find fault with me again.” Mercy won his heart. Now, sinner, in that fashion God is dealing with you. Great sinners! Ungodly sinners! God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. I have threatened you, and you hardened your hearts against me. Therefore, come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Well,” says one, “I am afraid if you talk to sinners so they will go and sin more and more.” Yes, there are brutes everywhere, who can be so unnatural as to sin because grace abounds, but I bless God there is such a thing as the influence of love, and I am rejoiced that many feel the force of it, and yield to the conquering arms of amazing grace. The Spirit of God wins the day by such arguments as these; love is the great

battering-ram which opens gates of brass. When the Lord says, "I have blotted out thy transgressions like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities," then the man is moved to repentance.

I can tell you hundreds and thousands of cases in which this infinite love has done all the good that morality itself could ask to have done; it has changed the heart and turned the entire current of the man's nature from sin to righteousness. The sinner has believed, repented, turned from his evil ways, and become zealous for holiness. Looking to Jesus he has felt his sin forgiven, and he has started up a new man, to lead a new life. God grant it may be so this morning, and he shall have all the glory of it.

III. So now we must close — and this is the last point — **THE PROCLAMATION OF THIS FACT**, that "Christ died for the ungodly." I would not mind if I were condemned to live fifty years more, and never to be allowed to speak but these five words, if I might be allowed to utter them in the ear of every man, and woman, and child who lives. "CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY" is the best message that even angels could bring to men. In the proclamation of this the whole church ought to take its share. Those of us who can address thousands should be diligent to cry aloud — "Christ died for the ungodly"; but those of you who can speak to one, or write a letter to one, must keep on at this — "Christ died for the ungodly." Shout it out, or whisper it out; print it in capitals, or write it in a lady's hand — "Christ died for the ungodly." Speak it solemnly, it is not a thing for jest. Speak it joyfully; it is not a theme for sorrow, but for joy. Speak it firmly; it is indisputable fact. Facts of science, as they call them, are always questioned: this is unquestionable. Speak it earnestly; for if there be any truth which ought to arouse all a man's soul it is this: "Christ died for the ungodly." Speak it where the ungodly live, and that is at your own house. Speak it also down in the dark corners of the city, in the haunts of debauchery, in the home of the thief, in the den of the depraved. Tell it in the gaol; and sit down at the dying bed and read in a tender whisper — "Christ died for the ungodly." When you pass the harlot in the street, do not give a toss with that proud head of yours, but remember that "Christ died for the ungodly"; and when you recollect those that injured you, say no bitter word, but hold your tongue, and remember "Christ died for the ungodly." Make this henceforth the message of your life — "Christ died for the ungodly."

And, oh, dear friends, you that are not saved, take care that you receive this message. Believe it. Go to God with this on your tongue — “Lord save me, for Christ died for the ungodly, and I am of them.” Fling yourself right on to this as a man commits himself to his lifebelt amid the surging billows. “But I do not feel,” says one. Trust not your feelings if you do; but with no feelings and no hopes of your own, cling desperately to this, “Christ died for the ungodly.” The transforming, elevating, spiritualising, moralising, sanctifying power of this great fact you shall soon know and be no more ungodly; but first, as ungodly, rest you on this, “Christ died for the ungodly.” Accept this truth, my dear hearer, and you are saved. I do not mean merely that you will be pardoned, I do not mean that you will enter heaven, I mean much more; I mean that you will have a new heart; you will be saved from the love of sin, saved from drunkenness, saved from uncleanness, saved from blasphemy, saved from dishonesty. “Christ died for the ungodly” — if that be really known and trusted in, it will open in your soul new springs of living water which will cleanse the Augean stable of your nature, and make a temple of God of that which was before a den of thieves. Trust in the mercy of God through the death of Jesus Christ, and a new era in your life’s history will at once commence.

Having put this as plainly as I know how, and having guarded my speech to prevent there being anything like a flowery sentence in it, having tried to put this as clearly as daylight itself, — that “Christ died for the ungodly,” if your ears refuse the precious boons that come through the dying Christ, your blood be on your own heads, for there is no other way of salvation for any one among you. Whether you reject or accept this, I am clear. But oh! do not reject it, for it is your life. If the Son of God dies for sinners, and sinners reject his blood, they have committed the most heinous offence possible. I will not venture to affirm, but I do suggest that the devils in hell are not capable of so great a stretch of criminality as is involved in the rejection of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Here lies the highest love. The incarnate God bleeds to death to save men, and men hate God so much that they will not even have him as he dies to save them. They will not be reconciled to their Creator, though he stoops from his loftiness to the depths of woe in the person of his Son on their behalf. This is depravity indeed, and desperateness of rebellion. God grant you may not be guilty of it. There can be no fiercer flame of wrath than that which will break forth from love that has been trampled upon, when men have put from them

eternal life, and done despite to the Lamb of God. “Oh,” says one, “would God I could believe!” “Sir, what difficulty is there in it? Is it hard to believe the truth? Darest thou belie thy God? Art thou steeling thy heart to such desperateness that thou wilt call thy God a liar?” “No; I believe Christ died for the ungodly,” says one, “but I want to know how to get the merit of that death applied to my own soul.” Thou mayest, then, for here it is — “He that believeth in him,” that is, he that trusts in him, “is not condemned.” Here is the gospel and the whole of it — “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned.”

I am a poor weak man like yourselves, but my gospel is not weak; and it would be no stronger if one of “the mailed cherubim, or sworded seraphim” could take the platform and stand here instead of me. He could tell to you no better news. God, in condescension to your weakness, has chosen one of your fellow mortals to bear to you this message of infinite affection. Do not reject it! By your souls’ value, by their immortality, by the hope of heaven and by the dread of hell, lay hold upon eternal life; and by the fear that this may be your last day on earth, yea, and this evening your last hour, I do beseech you now, “steal away to Jesus.” There is life in a look at the crucified one; there is life at this moment for you. Look to him now and live. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Ezekiel
16:1-14; Romans 5:1-11.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 174, 502 (v. 4, 5, 6),
553

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

EARNEST EXPOSTULATION

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 1st, 1883, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

— Romans 2:4

The apostle is intensely personal in his address. This verse is not spoken to us all in the mass, but to some one in particular. The apostle fixes his eyes upon a single person, and speaks to him as “Thee” and “Thou.” “Despisest *thou* the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” It should ever be the intent of the preacher to convey his message to each hearer in his own separate individuality. It is always a very happy sign when a man begins to think of himself as an individual, and when the expostulations and invitations of the gospel are seen by him to be directed to himself personally. I will give nothing for that indirect, essay-like preaching which is as the sheet lightning of summer, dazzling for the moment, and flaming over a broad expanse, but altogether harmless, since no bolt is launched from it, and its ineffectual fires leave no trace behind. I will give nothing for that kind of hearing which consists in the word being heard by everybody in general, and by no one in particular. It is when the preacher can “Thee” and “Thou” his hearers that he is likely to do them good. When each man is made to say,

“This is for me,” then the power of God is present in the word. One personal, intentional touch of the hem of Christ’s garment conveys more blessing than all the pressure of the crowd that thronged about the Master. The laying of his healing hand upon the individual who was suffering had more virtue in it than all those heavenly addresses which fell from his lips upon minds that did not receive the truth for themselves. I do pray that we may come to personal dealings with the Lord each one for himself, and that the Spirit of God may convince each man and each woman, according as the case may stand before the living God. O my hearer, *thou* art now to be lovingly spoken with: I speak not to You as unto many, but unto *thee*, as one by thyself.

Observe that the apostle singled out an individual who had condemned others for transgressions, in which he himself indulged. This man owned so much spiritual light that he knew right from wrong, and he diligently used his knowledge to judge others, condemning them for their transgressions. As for himself, he preferred the shade, where no fierce light might beat on his own conscience and disturb his unholy peace. His judgment was spared the pain of dealing with his home offenses by being set to work upon the faults of others. He had a candle, but he did not place it on the table to light his own room; he held it out at the front door to inspect therewith his neighbours who passed by. Ho! my good friend, my sermon is for thee. Paul looks this man in the face and says, “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things:” and then he pointedly says to him: “Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” Well did the apostle aim that piercing arrow; it hits the center of the target and strikes a folly common to mankind. The poet of the night-watches wrote, —

All men think all men mortal but themselves.

As truly might I say, “All men think all men guilty but themselves.” The punishment which is due to sin the guilty reckon to be surely impending upon others, but they scarce believe that it can ever fall upon themselves. A personal doom for themselves is an idea which they will not harbour: if the dread thought should light upon them they shake it off as men shake snow-flakes from their cloaks. The thought of personal guilt, judgment,

and condemnation is inconvenient; it breeds too much trouble within, and so they refuse it lodging. Vain men go maundering on their way, whispering of peace and safety; doting as if God had passed an act of amnesty and oblivion for them, and had made for them an exception to all the rules of justice, and all the manner of his courts. Do men indeed believe that they alone shall go unpunished? No man will subscribe to that notion when it is written down in black and white, and yet the mass of men live as if this were true; I mean the mass of men who have sufficient light to condemn sin in others. They start back from the fact of their own personal guiltiness and condemnation, and go on in their ungodliness as if there were no great white throne for them, no last assize, no judge, no word of condemnation, and no hell of wrath. Alas, poor madmen, thus to dream! O Spirit of Truth save them from this fatal infatuation.

Sin is always on the downward grade, so that when a man proceeds a certain length he inevitably goes beyond it. The person addressed by the apostle first thought to escape judgment, and then he came to think lightly of the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God. He thinks he shall escape in the future, and because of that he despises the present goodness and longsuffering of the Most High. Of course he does. If he does not believe in the terrors of the world to come for himself, he naturally reckons it to be a small thing to have been spared their immediate experience. Barren tree as he is, he does not believe that he will ever be cut down, and therefore he feels no gratitude to the dresser of the vineyard for pleading, "Let it alone yet another year, till I dig about it, and dung it." I wish, as God shall help me, to drive hard at the consciences of men upon this matter. I would be to you, my careless friend, what Jonah was to Nineveh: I would warn you, and bestir you to repentance. Oh that the Holy Ghost would make this sermon effectual for the arousing of every unsaved soul that shall hear or read it!

I. First, let me speak this morning to thee, O unregenerate, impenitent man, concerning THE GOODNESS OF GOD WHICH THOU HAST EXPERIENCED. Thou hast known the goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering of God. According to the text, "riches" of these have been spent upon unconverted, ungodly men, and upon thee as one of them. Let me speak with thee first, O man, and remind thee how favoured thou hast been of God by being made a partaker of "the riches of his goodness." In

many cases this is true of temporal things. Men may be without the fear of God, and yet, for all that, God may be pleased to prosper their endeavours in business. They succeed almost beyond their expectation — I mean some of them; probably the description applies to thee. They rise from the lowest position, and accumulate about them the comforts and luxuries of life. Though they have no religion, they have wit, and prudence, and thrift, and so they compete with others, and God permits them to be winners in the race for wealth. Moreover, he allows them to enjoy good health, vigour of mind, and strength of constitution: they are happy in the wife of their youth, and their children are about them. Theirs is an envied lot. Death seems for awhile forbidden to knock at their door, even though he has been ravaging the neighbourhood; even sickness does not molest their household. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Abraham had to prepare a Machpelah, and David mourned over his sons; but these have had to make scant provision for family sepulchre; a hedge has in very deed been set about them and all that they have. I know that it is thus with many who do not love God, and have never yielded to the entreaties of his grace. They love not the hand which enriches them, they praise not the Lord who daily loadeth them with benefits. How is it that men can receive such kindness, and yield no return? O sirs, you are to-day blessed with all that need requires; but I pray you remember that you might have been in the depths of poverty. An illness would have lost you your situation; or a slight turn in trade would have left you bankrupt. You are well to-day; but you might have been tossing to and fro upon a bed of sickness; you might have been in the hospital, about to lose a limb. Shall not God be praised for health and freedom from pain? You might have been shut up in yonder asylum, in the agonies of madness. A thousand ills have been kept from you; you have been exceedingly favoured by the goodness of the Most High. Is it not so? And truly it is a wonderful thing that God should give his bread to those that lift up their heel against him, that he should cause his light to shine upon those who never perceive his goodness therein, that he should multiply his mercies upon ungodly men who only multiply their rebellions against him, and turn the gifts of his love into instruments of transgression.

Furthermore, this goodness of God had not only come to you in a temporal form, O impenitent man, but it has also visited you in a spiritual manner. Myriads of our fellow men have never had an opportunity of

knowing Christ. The missionary's foot has never trodden the cities wherein they dwell, and so they die in the dark. Multitudes are going downward, downward; but they do not know the upward road; their minds have never been enlightened by the teachings of God's word, and hence they sin with less grievousness of fault. You are placed in the very focus of Christian light, and yet you follow evil! Will you not think of this? Time was when a man would have to work for years to earn enough money to buy a Bible. There were times when he could not have earned one even with that toil; now the word of God lies upon your table, you have a copy of it in almost every room of your house; is not this a boon from God? This is the land of the open Bible, and the land of the preached word of God; in this you prove the riches of God's goodness. Do you despise this wealth of mercy? Possibly you have enjoyed the further privilege of sitting under a ministry which has been particularly plain and earnest; you have not had sermons preached *before* you, they have been preached *at* you: the minister has seized upon you and tugged at your conscience, as though he would force you to the Saviour. With cries and entreaties you have been invited to your heavenly Father, and yet you have not come. Is this a small thing?

What is more, you have been favoured with a tender conscience. When you do wrong you know it, and smart for it. What mean those wakeful nights after you have yielded to a temptation? What means that miserable feeling of shame? that fever of unrest? You find it hard to stifle the inward monitor, and difficult to resist the Spirit of God. Your road to perdition is made peculiarly hard; do you mean to follow it at all costs, and go over hedge and ditch to hell?

You have not only been aroused by conscience, but the good Spirit has striven with you, and have been almost persuaded to be a Christian. Such has been the blessed work of the Spirit upon your heart that you have at times been melted down, and ready to be moulded by grace. A strange softness has come over you, and if you had not gathered up all your evil strength, and if the devil had not helped you to resist, you had by this time dropped into the Saviour's arms. Oh, the riches of the goodness of God to have thus wooed you, and pressed his love upon you! You have scarcely had a stripe, or a frown, or an ill word from God; his ways have been all kindness, and gentleness, and longsuffering from the first day of your

memory even until now. “Despisest thou the riches of his goodness?” O man, answer this, I implore thee.

The apostle then dwells upon the riches of “*forbearance*.” Forbearance comes in when men having offended, God withholds the punishment that is due to them; when men, having been invited to mercy, have refused it, and yet God continues to stretch out his hands, and invite them to come to him. Patient endurance of offenses and insults has been manifested by God to many of you, who now hear these words of warning. The Lord knows to whom I speak and may he make you, also, know that I am speaking to you, even to you. Some men have gone back to the very sin of which for awhile they repented; they have suffered for their folly, but have turned again to it with suicidal determination. They are desperately set on their own ruin and nothing can save them. The burnt child has run to the fire again; the singed moth has plunged again into the flame of the candle; who can pity such self-inflicted miseries? They are given over to perdition, for they will not be warned. They have returned to the haunt of vice, though they seemed to have been snatched from the deep ditch of its filthiness. They have wantonly and wilfully returned to their cups, though the poison of former draughts is yet burning in their veins. Yet, despite this folly, God shows forbearance towards them. They have grievously provoked him when they have done despite to his word, and have even turned to laughter the solemnities of his worship, against their own consciences, and to their own confusion: yet when his hand has been lifted up he has withdrawn it in mercy. See how God has always tempered his providence with kindness to them. He laid them low so that they were sore sick, but at the voice of their moaning he restored them. They trembled on the brink of death, yet he permitted them to recover strength; and now, despite their vows of amendment, here they are, callous and careless, unmindful of the mercy which gave them a reprieve.

Did you ever think what is included in the riches of forbearance. There are quick tempered individuals who only need to be a little provoked, and hard words and blows come quick and furious: but, oh, the forbearance of God when he is provoked to his face by ungodly men! By men, I mean, who hear his word, and yet refuse it! They slight his love, and yet he perseveres in it. Justice lays its hand on the sword, but mercy holds it back in its scabbard. Well might each spared one say, —

“O unexhausted Grace
 O Love unspeakable!
 I am not gone to my own place;
 I am not yet in hell!
 Earth doth not open yet,
 My soul to swallow up:
 And, hanging o’er the burning pit,
 I still am forced to hope.”

Our apostle adds to goodness and forbearance the riches of “*longsuffering*.” We draw a distinction between forbearance and longsuffering. Forbearance has to do with the magnitude of sin; longsuffering with the multiplicity of it: forbearance has to do with present provocation; longsuffering relates to that provocation repeated, and continued for a length of time. Oh, how long doth God suffer the ill manners of men! Forty years long was he grieved with that generation whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Has it come to forty years yet with you, dear hearer? Possibly it may have passed even that time, and a half-century of provocation may have gone into eternity to bear witness against you. What if I should even have to say that sixty and seventy years have continued to heap up the loads of their transgressions, until the Lord saith, “I am pressed down under your sins; as a cart that is full of sheaves I am pressed down under you.” Yet for all that, here you are on praying ground and pleading terms with God; here you are where yet the Saviour reigns upon the throne of grace; here you are where mercy is to be had for the asking, where free grace and dying love ring out their charming bells of invitation to joy and peace! Oh, the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering. Three-fold is the claim: will you not regard it? Can you continue to despise it?

I should like to set all this in a striking light if I could, and therefore I would remind you of who and what that God is who has exhibited this goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering to men. Remember how *great* he is. When men insult a great prince the offence is thought to be highly heinous. If anyone should openly insult our own beloved Queen, and continue to do so, all the nation would be clamorous to have the

impertinence ended speedily. We cannot bear that a beloved ruler should be publicly insulted. And what think you of the sin which provokes God? which to his face defies him? and in his very courts resists him? Shall this always be forborne with? Is there not a limit to longsuffering? *Goodness* also adds another item to the provocation; for we naturally say, “Why should one so good be treated so cruelly?” If God were a tyrant, if he were unrighteous or unkind, it were not so much amiss that men stood out against him; but when his very name is love, and when he manifests the bowels of a Father towards his wandering children it is shameful that he should be so wantonly provoked. Those words of Jesus were extremely touching when he pointed to his miracles, and asked, “For which of these things do you stone me?” When I think of God I may well say — for which of his deeds do you provoke him? Every morning he draws the curtain and glads the earth with light, and gives *you* eyes to see it; he sends his rain upon the ground to bring forth bread for man, and he gives *you* life to eat thereof — is this a ground for revolting from him? Every single minute of our life is cheered with the tender kindness of God, and every spot is gladdened with his love. I wonder that the Lord does not sweep away the moral nuisance of a guilty race from off the face of earth. Man’s sin must have been terribly offensive to God from day to day, and yet still he shows kindness, love, forbearance. This adds an excessive venom to man’s disobedience. How can he grieve such goodness? How can divine goodness fail to resent such base ingratitude?

Think also of God’s *knowledge*; for he knows all the transgressions of men. “What the eye does not see the heart does not rue,” is a truthful proverb; but every transgression is committed in the very presence of God, so that penitent David cried, “Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” Transgression is committed in the sight of God, from whose eyes nothing is hidden. Remember also, that the Lord never can forget; before his eyes all things stand out in clear light, not only the things of to-day, but all the transgressions of a life. Yet for all this he doth forbear. With evil reeking before his face, he is slow to anger, and waiteth that he may be gracious.

All this while, remember, the Lord is great in *power*. Some are patient because they are powerless: they bear and forbear because they cannot well help themselves; but it is not so with God. Had he but willed it, you

had been swept into hell; only a word from him and the impenitent had fallen in the wilderness, and their spirits would have passed into the realms of endless woe. In a moment the Lord could have eased him of his adversary; he could have stopped that flippant tongue, and closed that lustful eye in an instant. That wicked heart would have failed to beat if God had withdrawn his power, and that rebellious breath would have ceased also. Had it not been for longsuffering you unbelievers would long since have known what it is to fall into the hands of an angry God. Will you continue to grieve the God who so patiently bears with you?

Be it never forgotten that sin is to God much more intolerable than it is to us. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Things which we call little sins are great and grievous evils to him: they do, as it were, touch the apple of his eye. "Oh, do not," he says, "do not this abominable thing that I hate!" His Spirit is grieved and vexed with every idle word and every sensual thought; and hence it is a wonder of wonders that a God so sensitive of sin, a God so able to avenge himself of his adversaries, a God who knows the abundance of human evil, and marks it all, should nevertheless exhibit riches of goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; yet this is what you, my ungodly hearer, have been experiencing many a long year. Here let us pause; and oh that each one who is still unsaved would sing most sincerely the words of Watts: —

"Lord, we have long abused thy love,
Too long indulged our sin,
Our aching hearts e'en bleed to see
What rebels we have been.
"No more, ye lusts, shall ye command,
No more will we obey;
Stretch out, O God, thy conqu'ring hand,
And drive thy foes away."

II. Come with me, friend, and let me speak to thee of THE SIN OF WHICH THOU ART SUSPECTED. Hear me, unconverted sinner: the sin of which thou art suspected is this, — "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering?" The Lord's goodness ought to be admired and to be adored, and dost thou despise it? His goodness ought to be wondered at and told as a marvel in the ears of others, and dost thou despise it? That I may rake thy conscience a little, lend me thine ear.

Some despise God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, because they *never even gave a thought to it*. God has given you life to keep you in being, and he has indulged you with his kindness, but it has not yet occurred to you that this patience is at all remarkable or worthy of the smallest thanks. You have been a drunkard, have you? a swearer? a Sabbath-breaker? a lover of sinful pleasure? Perhaps not quite so; but still you have forgotten God altogether, and yet he has abounded in goodness to you: is not this a great wrong? The Lord saith, Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but these my creatures do not know, my favoured ones do not consider. Why, you have no such forbearance with others as God has had with you. You would not keep a dog if it never followed at your heel, but snarled at you: you would not even keep a potter's vessel if it held no water, and was of no service to you; you would break it in pieces, and throw it on the dunghill. As for yourself, you are fearfully and wonderfully made, both as to your body and as to your soul, and yet you have been of no service to your Maker, nor even thought of being of service to him. Still, he has spared you all these years, and it has never occurred to you that there has been any wonderful forbearance in it. Assuredly, O man, thou despisest the longsuffering of thy God.

Others have, perhaps, thought of it, but *have never seriously meditated thereon*. When we offend a man, if we are right-minded, we not only note the fact with regret, but we sit down and weigh the matter, and seek to rectify it; for we would not be unjust to any person, and if we felt that we had been acting unfairly it would press upon our minds until we could make amends. But are there not some of you who have never given half an hour's consideration to your relation to your God? He has spared you all this while, and yet it has never occurred to you to enter into your chamber and sit down and consider your conduct towards him. It would seem to be too much trouble even to think of your Creator. His longsuffering leads you to repentance, but you have not repented; in fact, you have not thought it worth your while to consider the question at all: you have thought it far more important to enquire, "What shall I eat and what shall I drink?" Bread and broadcloth have shut out the thought of God. Ah me, you will stand at his judgment bar before long — and then? Perhaps ere this week is finished you may have to answer, not to me, but unto him

that sits upon the throne; therefore I do implore you now, for the first time give this matter thought. Despise no longer the goodness and longsuffering of God.

This longsuffering is despised, further, by those who have *imagined that God does not take any great account of what they do*. So long as they do not go into gross and open sin, and offend the laws of their country, they do not believe that it is of any consequence whether they love God or not, whether they do righteousness or not, whether they are sober and temperate, or drunken and wanton; whether they are clean in heart by God's Spirit, or defiled in soul and life. Thou thinkest that God is altogether such an one as thyself, and that he will wink at thy transgression and cover up thy sin; but thou shalt not find it so. That base thought proves that thou despisest his longsuffering.

Some even get to think that the warnings of love are so much wind, and *that the threatenings of God will never be fulfilled*. They have gone on for many years without being punished, and instead of drawing the conclusion that the longer the blow is in falling the heavier it will be when it does come, they imagine that because it is long delayed the judgment will never come at all; and so they sport and trifle between the jaws of death and hell. They hear warnings as if they were all moonshine, and fancy that this holy Book, with its threatenings, is but a bugbear to keep fools quiet. If thou thinkest so, sir, then indeed thou hast despised the goodness and forbearance and longsuffering of God. Do you imagine that this forbearance will last for ever? Do you dream that at least it will continue with you for many years? I know your secret thoughts: you see other men die suddenly, but your secret thought is that you will have long space and ample time: you hear of one struck down with paralysis, and another carried off by apoplexy, but you flatter yourselves that you will have plenty of leisure to think about these things. Oh, how can you be so secure? How can you thus tempt the Lord? False prophets in these evil days play into men's hands and hold out the hope that you may go into the next world wrong, and yet be set right in the end. This is a vile flattery of your wicked hearts; but yet remember that even according to their maundering centuries may elapse before this fancied restoration may occur. A sensible man would not like to run the risk of even a year of agony. Half-an-hour of acute pain is dreaded by most people. Can it be that the

very men who start back from the dentist's door, afraid of the pinch which extricates an aching tooth, will run the risk of years of misery? Take the future of the impenitent even on this footing, it is a thing to be dreaded, and by every means avoided. I say, these flattering prophets themselves, if rightly understood, give you little enough of hope; but what will come to you if the old doctrine proves to be true and you go away into everlasting fire in hell, as the Scripture puts it? Will you live an hour in jeopardy of such a doom? Will you so despise the longsuffering and forbearance of the Lord?

I will not enlarge and use many words, for I am myself weary of words: I want to persuade you even with tears. My whole soul would attract you to your God, your Father. I would come to close quarters with you, and say, — Do you not think that, even though you fall into no doctrinal error, and indulge no hazy hope as to either restitution or annihilation, yet still it is a dreadful despising of God's mercy when you keep on playing with God, and saying to his grace, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee"? The more gentle God is the more you procrastinate, and the more in tenderness he speaks of pardon the more you transgress. Is this generous? Is it right? Is it wise? Can it be a fit and proper thing to do? Oh, my dear hearer, why will you act thus shamefully? Some of you delight to come and hear me preach, and drink in all I have to say, and you will even commend me for being earnest with your souls; and yet, after all, you will not decide for God, for Christ, for heaven. You are between good and evil, neither cold nor hot. I would ye were either cold or hot; I could even wish that ye either thought this word of mine to be false, or else that, believing it to be true, you at once acted upon it. How can you incur the double guilt of offending God and of knowing that it is an evil thing to do so? You reject Christ, and yet admit that he ought to be received by you! You speak well of a gospel which you will not accept for yourselves! You believe great things of a Saviour whom you will not have to be your Saviour! Jesus himself says, "If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?"

"Despisest thou the longsuffering of God?" Dare you do it? I tremble as I think of a man despising God's goodness. Is not this practical blasphemy? Darest thou do it? Oh, if thou hast done it hitherto, do it no more. Ere yon sun goes down again, say within thy heart, "I will be a despiser of God's

goodness no longer; I will arise and go unto my Father, and I will say unto him, — Father, I have sinned. I will not rest until in the precious blood he has washed my sins away.”

III. In closing this sermon I desire to remind thee, O ungodly man, of THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHICH THOU ART FORGETFUL. Read my text, — “Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; *not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*” Now there are many here who know as a matter of doctrine that the goodness of God leads them to repentance, and yet they do not know it as a practical truth affecting their lives: indeed, they so act that it is not true to them at all. Yet, if they do not know this they are wilfully ignorant; not willing to retain in their minds a fact so disagreeable to them. None are so blind as those who will not see: but he who does not see, and yet hath eyes, has a criminality about his blindness which is not found in that of those who have no sight. Dear hearer, whether you know this truth or not, I would remind you that God’s patience with you is meant to lead you to repentance. “How?” say you. Why, first by *giving you an opportunity to repent*. These years, which are now coming to a considerable number with you, have been given you in order that you might turn to God. By the time you were twenty-one you had sinned quite enough; perhaps you had even then begun to mislead other youths, and to instruct in evil those under your influence. Why did not God take you away at once? It might have been for the benefit of the world if he had done so; but yet you were spared till you were thirty. Did not each year of your lengthened life prove that the Lord was saying “I will spare him, for perhaps he will yet amend and think upon his God. I will give him more light, and increase his comforts; I will give him better teaching, better preaching; peradventure he will repent.” Yet you have not done so. Have you lived to be forty, and are you where you were when you were twenty? Are you still out of Christ? Then you are worse than you were; for you have sinned more deeply and you have provoked the Lord more terribly. You have now had space enough. What more do you need? When the child has offended, you say, “Child, unless you beg pardon at once, I must punish you”: would you give a boy so many minutes to repent in as God has given you years? I think not. If a servant is continually robbing you; if he is careless, slothful, disobedient, you say to him, “I have passed over your faults several times, but one of these days I shall discharge you.

I cannot always put up with this slovenliness, this blundering, this idleness: one of these times you will have to go." Have you not so spoken to your female servant, and thought it kind on your part to give her another chance? The Lord has said the same to you; yet here you are, a living but impenitent man; spared, but spared only to multiply your transgressions. This know, that his forbearance gives you an opportunity to repent; do not turn it into an occasion for hardening your heart.

But next, the Lord in this is pleased to give *a suggestion to you to repent*. It seems to me that every morning when a man wakes up still impenitent, and finds himself out of hell, the sunlight seems to say, "I shine on thee yet another day, as that in this day thou mayest repent." When your bed receives you at night I think it seems to say, "I will give you another night's rest, that you may live to turn from your sins and trust in Jesus." Every mouthful of bread that comes to the table says, "I have to support your body that still you may have space for repentance." Every time you open the Bible the pages say, "We speak with you that you may repent." Every time you hear a sermon, if it be such a sermon as God would have us preach, it pleads with you to turn unto the Lord and live. Surely the time past of your life may suffice you to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. "The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth men everywhere to repent." Do not life and death, and heaven and hell, call upon you so to do? Thus you have in God's goodness space for repentance, and a suggestion to repent.

But something more is here; for I want you to notice that the text does not say, "The goodness of God *calleth* thee to repentance," but "*leadeth* thee." This is a much stronger word. God calls to repentance by the gospel; God *leads to repentance* by his goodness. It is as though he plucked at your sleeve and said, "Come this way." His goodness lays its gentle hand on you, drawing you with cords of love and bands of a man. God's forbearance cries, "Why wilt thou hate me? What wrong have I done thee? I have spared thee; I have spared thy wife and children to thee; I have raised thee up from the bed of sickness; I have loaded thy board; I have filled thy wardrobe; I have done thee a thousand good turns; wherefore dost thou disobey me? Turn unto thy God and Father, and live in Christ Jesus."

If, on the other hand, you have not received rich temporal favours, yet the Lord still leads you to repentance by a rougher hand; as when the prodigal fain would have filled his belly with husks, but could not, and the pangs of hunger came upon him; those pains were a powerful message from the Father to lead him to the home where there was bread enough and to spare. “The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” Oh, that thou wouldest yield to its sweet leading, and follow as a child follows the guidance of a nurse. Let thy crosses lead thee to the cross; let thy joys lead thee to find joy in Christ.

Do you not think that all this should *encourage you to repent*, since God himself leads you that way? If God leads you to repentance he does not mean to cast you away. If he bids you repent, then he is willing to accept your repentance, and to be reconciled to you. If he bids you change your mind, it is because his own mind is love. Repentance implies a radical change in your view of things, and in your estimate of matters; it is a change in your purposes, a change in your thoughts and in your conduct. If the Lord leads you that way he will help you in it. follow his gracious leading till his divine Spirit shall lead you with still greater power and still greater efficacy, till at last you find that he has wrought in you both repentance and faith, and you are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. If “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance,” then be sure of this, that the goodness of God will receive thee when thou dost repent, and thou shalt live in his sight as his well-beloved and forgiven child.

I close now, but I am sorry so to do, for I have not pleaded one-half as I could have wished. Yet what more can I say? I will put it to yourselves. If you were in God’s stead, could you bear to be treated as you have treated him? If you were all goodness and tenderness, and had borne with a creature now for thirty or forty years, how would you bear to see that creature still stand out, and even draw an inference from your gentleness to encourage him in his rebellion? Would you not say, “Well, if my longsuffering makes him think little of sin, I will change my hand. If tenderness cannot win him, I must leave him; if even my love does not affect him, I will let him along. He is given unto his evil ways — I will cease from him, and see what his end will be”? O Lord, say not so, say not so unto anyone in this house, but of thy great mercy make this day to be

as the beginning of life to many. Oh that hearts may be touched with pity for their slighted Saviour, that they may seek his face! Here is the way of salvation: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” You know how the Master bade us put it. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” First, we are to preach faith, whereby we lay hold on Christ; then baptism, whereby we confess that faith, and own that we are dead and buried with Christ that we may live with him in newness of life. Those are the two points he bids us set before you, and I do set them before you. Weary, but not quite wearied out, O impenitent man, I plead with thee! Though thou hast so often been pleaded with in vain, once more I speak with thee in Christ’s stead, and say — Repent of thy sin, look to thy Saviour, and confess thy faith in his own appointed way. I verily believe that if I had been pleading with some of you to save the life of a dog I should have prevailed with you a great while ago. And will you not care about the saving of your own souls? Oh, strange infatuation — that men will not consent to be themselves saved; but foolishly, madly, hold out against the mercy of God which leads them to repentance. God bless you, beloved, and may none of you despise his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

ALL JOY IN ALL TRIALS

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, February 4th, 1883, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

— James 1:2-4

James calls the converted among the twelve tribes his brethren. Christianity has a great uniting power: it both discovers and creates relationships among the sons of men. It reminds us of the ties of nature, and binds us with the bonds of grace. Every one that is born of the Spirit of God is brother to every other that is born of the same Spirit. Well may we be called brethren, for we are redeemed by one blood; we are partakers of the same life; we feed upon the same heavenly food; we are united to the same living head; we seek the same ends; we love the same Father: we are heirs of the same promises; and we shall dwell for ever together in the same heaven. Wherefore, let brotherly love continue; let us love one another with a pure heart fervently, and manifest that love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. Whatever brotherhood may be a sham, let the brotherhood of believers be the most real thing beneath the stars.

Beginning with this word “brethren,” James shows a true brotherly sympathy with believers in their trials, and this is a main part of Christian fellowship. “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of

Christ.” If we are not tempted ourselves at this moment, others are: let us remember them in our prayers; for in due time our turn will come, and we shall be put into the crucible. As we would desire to receive sympathy and help in our hour of need, let us render it freely to those who are now enduring trial. Let us remember those that are in bonds, as bound with them, and those that suffer affliction as being ourselves in the body. Remembering the trials of his brethren, James tries to cheer them, and therefore he says, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials.” It is a part of our high calling to rise ourselves into confidence; and it is also our duty to see that none of our brethren despond, much less despair. The whole tendency of our holy faith is to elevate and to encourage. Grace breeds no sorrow, except the healthy sorrow which comes with saving repentance and leads to the joy of pardon: it comes not to make men miserable, but to wipe all tears from their eyes. Our dream is not of devils descending a dreary staircase to hell, but of angels ascending and descending upon a ladder, the top of which leads to the shining throne of God. The message of the gospel is one of joy and gladness, and were it universally understood and received this world would be no longer a wilderness, but it would rejoice and blossom as the rose. Let grace reign in all hearts, and this earth will become a temple filled with perpetual song; and even the trials of life will become causes of the highest joy, so beautifully described by James as “all joy,” as if every possible delight were crowded into it. Blessed be God, it is our work, not to upbraid, but to cheer all the brotherhood: we walk in a light which glorifies everything upon which it falls, and turns losses into gains. We are able in sober earnest to speak with the afflicted, and bid them be patient under the chastening hand of God; yea, to count it all joy when they fall into divers trials because those trials will work out for them such signal, such lasting good. They may be well content to sow in tears since they are sure to reap in joy.

Without further preface we will come at once to the text; and observe that in speaking about affliction, for that is the subject of the text, the apostle notes, first, *the essential point which is assailed by temptation*, namely, your faith. Your faith is the target that all the arrows are shot at; the furnace is kindled for the trial of your faith. Notice, secondly, *the invaluable blessing which is thus gained*, namely, the proving of your faith, discovering whether it be the right faith or no. This proof of our faith

is a blessing of which I cannot speak too highly. Then, thirdly, we may not overlook *the priceless virtue which is produced* by this process of testing, namely, patience; for the proving of your faith produces patience, and this is the soul's surest enrichment. Lastly, in connection with that patience we shall note *the spiritual completeness which is thus promoted*: — "That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Perhaps you have noticed that little variations I have made in the text; but I am now following the Revised Version, which gives an admirable rendering. I will read it. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing."

I. First, let us think a little upon THE ESSENTIAL POINT WHICH IS ASSAILED by temptation or trial. *It is your faith which is tried.* It is supposed that you have that faith. You are not the people of God, you are not truly brethren unless you are believers. It is this faith of yours which is peculiarly obnoxious to Satan and to the world which lieth in the wicked one. If you had not faith they would not be enemies of yours; but faith is the mark of the chosen of God, and therefore his foes become the foes of all the faithful, spitting their venom specially upon their faith. God Himself hath put enmity between the serpent and the woman, between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed; and that enmity must show itself. The serpent bites at the heel of the true seed: hence mockings, persecutions, temptations, and trials are sure to beset the pathway to faith. The hand of faith is against all evil, and all evil is against faith. Faith is that blessed grace which is most pleasing to God, and hence it is the most displeasing to the devil. By faith God is greatly glorified, and hence by faith Satan is greatly annoyed. He rages at faith because he sees therein his own defeat and the victory of grace.

Because the trial of your faith brings honour to the Lord, therefore the Lord Himself is sure to try it that out of its trial praise may come to his grace by which faith is sustained. Our chief end is to glorify God, and if our trials enable us more fully to answer the end of our being it is well that they should happen unto us. So early in our discourse we see reason to count it all joy when we fall into manifold trials.

It is by our faith that we are saved, justified, and brought near to God, and therefore it is no marvel that it is attacked. It is by believing in Christ that

we are delivered from the reigning power of sin, and receive power to become the sons of God. Faith is as vital to salvation as the heart is vital to the body: hence the javelins of the enemy are mainly aimed at this essential grace. Faith is the standard bearer, and the object of the enemy is to strike him down that the battle may be gained. If the foundations be removed what can the righteous do? If the cable can be snapped whither will the vessel drift? All the powers of darkness which are opposed to right and truth are sure to fight against our faith, and manifold temptations will march in their legions against our confidence in God.

It is by our faith that we live; we began to live by it, and continue to live by it, for “the just shall live by faith.” Once let faith go and our life is gone; and hence it is that the powers which war against us make their main assault upon this royal castle, this key of the whole position. Faith is your jewel, your joy, your glory; and the thieves who haunt the pilgrim way are all in league to tear it from you. Hold fast, therefore, this your choice treasure.

It is by faith, too, that Christians perform exploits. If men of old wrought daring and heroic deeds it was by faith. Faith is the fighting principle and the conquering principle: therefore it is Satan’s policy to slay it even as Pharaoh sought to kill the male children when Israel dwelt in Egypt. Rob a Christian of his faith and he will be like Samson when his locks were cut away: the Philistines will be upon him and the Lord will have departed from him. Marvel not if the full force of the current shall beat upon your faith, for it is the foundation of your spiritual house. Oh that your faith may abide steadfast and unmovable in all present trials, that so it may be found true in the hour of death and in the day of judgment. Woe unto that man whose faith fails him in this land of peace, for what will he do in the swelling of Jordan?

Now, think of *how faith is tried*. According to the text we are said to fall into “manifold temptations” or into “divers temptations” — that is to say, we may expect very many and very different troubles. In any case these trials will be most real. The twelve tribes to whom this epistle was written were a specially tried people, for in the first place they were, as Jews, greatly persecuted by all other nations, and when they became Christians they were cruelly persecuted by their own people. A Gentile convert was somewhat less in peril than a Jewish Christian, for the latter was crushed

between the upper and nether millstones of Paganism and Judaism. The Israelitish Christian was usually so persecuted by his own kith and kin that he had to flee from them, and whither could he go, for all other people abhorred the Jews? We are not in such a plight, but God's people even to this day will find that trial is no sham word. The rod in God's house is no toy to play with. The furnace, believe me, is no mere place of extra warmth to which you may soon accustom yourself: it is often heated seven times hotter, like the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar and God's children are made to know that the fire burns and devours. Our temptations are no inventions of nervousness nor hobgoblins of dreamy fear. Ye have heard of the patience of Job — his was real patience, for his afflictions were real. Could each tried believer among us tell his own story I do not doubt we would convince all who heard us that the troubles and temptations which we have endured are no fictions of romance, but must be ranked among the stern realities of actual life.

Ay, and note too, that the trials of Christians are such as would in themselves lead us into sin, for I take it that our translators would not have placed the word "temptation" in the text, and the Revisionists would not have retained it, if they had not felt that there was a colouring of temptation in its meaning, and that "trial" was hardly the word. The natural tendency of trouble is not to sanctify, but to induce sin. A man is very apt to become unbelieving under affliction: that is a sin. He is apt to murmur against God under it: that is a sin. He is apt to put forth his hand to some ill way of escaping from his difficulty: and that would be sin. Hence we are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation; because trial has in itself a measure of temptation"; and if it were not neutralized by abundant grace it would bear us towards sin. I suppose that every test must have in it a measure of temptation. The Lord cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man; but this is to be understood of his end and design. He entices no man to do evil; but yet He tries the sincerity and faithfulness of men by placing them where sin comes in their way, and does its best or its worst to ensnare them: His design being that the uprightness of His servants may thus be proved, both to themselves and others. We are not taken out of this world of temptation, but we are kept in it for our good. Because our nature is depraved it makes occasions for sin, both out of our joys and our trials, but by grace we overcome the tendency of nature, and so derive benefit from tribulation. Do I not speak

to many here who at times feel strong impulses towards evil, especially in the darksome hour when the spirit of evil walks abroad? Have you not been made to tremble for yourselves in season of fierce trial, for your feet were almost gone, your steps had well-nigh slipped. Is there any virtue that has not been weather-beaten? Is there any love that has not at times been so tried that it threatened to curdle into hate? Is there any good thing this side heaven which has marched all the way in silver slippers? Did ever a flower of grace blossom in this wretched clime without being tried with frost or blight? Our way is up the river; we have to stem the current, and struggle against a flood which would readily bear us to destruction. Thus, not only trials, but black temptations assail the Christian's faith.

As to what shape they take, we may say this much: the trial or temptation of each man is distinct from that of every other. When God did tempt Abraham he was bidden to take his son, his only son, and offer him upon a mountain for a sacrifice. Nobody here was ever tried in that way: nobody ever will be. We may have the trial of losing our child, but certainly not the trial of having a command to offer him in sacrifice. That was a trial peculiar to Abraham: necessary and useful to him, though never proposed to us. In the case of the young man in the gospels, our Lord Jesus tried him with, "If thou wouldest be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Some have dreamed that it must therefore be the duty of everybody to part with their possessions: but this is idle. It would not be the duty of any man to offer up his only son; and it is not the duty of every man to part with all his goods. These were tests to particular persons; and others equally special and searching have been applied in other cases. We are not to try ourselves, nor to desire other men's trials; it will be well if we endure those which the Lord appoints for us, for they will be wisely chosen. That which would most severely test me would perhaps be no trial to you; and that which tries you might be no temptation to me. This is one reason why we often judge one another so severely, because feeling ourselves to be strong in that particular point we argue that the fallen one must have been strong in that point too, and therefore must have willfully and earnestly have determined to do wrong. This may be a cruel supposition. We hastily conclude that the temptation must have been as feeble in his case as it would have been in our own; which is a great mistake, for a temptation which to you or to me would be no temptation at all, may be to another individual, of a

peculiar constitution and under singular circumstances, a most fierce and terrible blast from the adversary, before which he falls mournfully, but not with malice aforethought. Divers trials, says the apostle, and he knew what he said.

And, dear friends, sometimes these divers trials derive great force from their seemingly surrounding us, and cutting off escape: James says, — “Ye *fall into divers temptations*”: like men who fall into a pit, and do not know how to get out; or like soldiers who fall into an ambuscade; or travellers in the good old times when two or three footpaths surrounded them and made them feel that they had fallen into bad hands. The tempted see not which way to turn; they appear to be hemmed in; they are as a bird that is taken in the fowler’s snare. This it is that makes calamity of our manifold temptations, that they hedge up our way, and unless faith finds the clue we wander in a thorny maze.

At times temptation comes suddenly upon us, and so we fall into it. When we were at rest, and were quiet, suddenly the evil came, like a lion leaping from the thicket. When Job’s children were eating and drinking in their elder brother’s house, then suddenly a wind came from the wilderness, and the patriarch was bereaved: the cattle were ploughing, the sheep were grazing, the camels were at their service, and in a moment, by fire from heaven, and by robber bands, the whole of these possessions vanished. One messenger had not told his story before another followed at his heels; Job had no breathing time, the blows fell thick and fast. The trial of our faith is most severe when divers trials happen to us when we look not for them. It is not strange in the light of these things that James should say, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials”?

Those were the days of tumults, imprisonment, crucifixion, sword, and fire. Then the amphitheatre devoured Christians by thousands. The general cry was “The Christians to the lions!” Do you wonder if sometimes the bravest were made to say, Is our faith really true? This faith which is abhorred of all mankind, can it be divine? Has it come from God? Why, then, does He not interpose and deliver His people? Shall we apostatise? Shall we deny Christ and live, or shall we go on with our confession through innumerable torments even to a bloody death? Will fidelity answer after all? Is there a crown of glory? is there an eternity of bliss? Is there in very deed a resurrection of the dead? These questions came into men’s

minds then, and were fairly faced: the faith of martyrs was not taken up at second hand, or borrowed from their parents; they believed for themselves in downright earnest. Men and women in those days believed in such a way that they never flinched nor started aside from fear of death; indeed, they pressed forward to confess their faith in Jesus in such crowds that at last the heathen cried, "There must be something in it: it must be a religion of God, or how could these men so gladly bear their troubles?" This was the faith of God's elect, the work of the Holy Ghost.

You see, then, the main point of attack is our faith, and happy is the man whose shield can catch and quench all the fiery darts of the enemy.

II. That we may make the text more clear we shall next notice THE INVALUABLE BLESSING WHICH IS GAINED BY THE TRIAL OF OUR FAITH. The blessing gained is this, that our faith is tried and proved. Two Sabbaths ago I addressed you upon the man whose bad foundations led to the overthrow of his house; and I know that many said after the sermon: — "God grant that we may not be like him: may we have a firm foundation for our soul to rest on." Then you went home, and you sat down and said, "Have I this sure foundation?" You began to question, argue, reason, and so on, and your design was a good one. But I do not reckon that much came of it; our own looking within seldom yields solid comfort. Actual trial is far more satisfactory; but you must not try yourself. The effectual proof is by trials of God's sending. The way of trying whether you are a good soldier is to go down to the battle: the way to try whether a ship is well built is, not merely to order the surveyor to examine her, but to send her to sea: a storm will be the best test of her staunchness. They have built a new lighthouse upon the Eddystone: how do we know that it will stand? We judge by certain laws and principles, and feel tolerably safe about the structure; but, after all, we shall know best if after-years when a thousand tempests have beaten upon the lighthouse in vain. We need trials as a test as much as we need divine truth as our food. Admire the ancient types placed in the ark of the covenant of old: two things were laid close together, — the pot of manna and the rod. See how heavenly food and heavenly rule go together: how our sustenance and our chastening are equally provided for! A Christian cannot live without the manna nor without the rod. The two must go together. I mean this, that it is as great a mercy to have your salvation proved to you under

trial as it is to have it sustained in you by the consolations of the Spirit of God. Sanctified tribulations work the proof of our faith, and this is more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried by fire.

Now, when we are able to bear it without starting aside, *the trial proves our sincerity*. Coming out of a trouble the Christian says to himself, "Yes, I held fast mine integrity, and did not let it go. Blessed be God, I was not afraid of threatening; I was not crushed by losses; I was kept true to God under pressure. Now, I am sure that my religion is not a mere profession, but a real consecration to God. It has endured the fire, being kept by the power of God."

Next, it proves *the truthfulness of our doctrinal belief*. Oh, yes, you may say, "I have heard Mr. Spurgeon expound the doctrines, and I have believed them." This is poor work; but if you have been sick, and found a comfort in those doctrines, then you are assured of their truth. If you have been on the borders of the grave, and the gospel has given you joy and gladness, then you know how true it is. Experimental knowledge is the best and surest. If you have seen others pass through death itself triumphantly you have said, "This is proof to me: my faith is no guess-work: I have seen for myself." Is not this assurance cheaply purchased at any price? May we not count it all joy when the Lord puts us in the way of getting it? It seems to me that doubt is worse than trial. I had sooner suffer any affliction than be left to question the gospel or my own interest in it. Certainly it is a jewel worth purchasing even with our heart's blood.

Next, *your own faith in God* is proved when you can cling to Him under temptation. Not only your sincerity, but the divinity of your faith is proved; for a faith that is never tried, how can you depend upon it? But if in the darkest hour you have still said, "I cast my burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain me," and you find He does sustain you, then is your faith that of God's elect. If in temptation you cry to God in prayer that you may keep your garment unspotted, and He helps you to do so, then also are you sure that yours is the faith which the Spirit begets in the soul. After a great fight of affliction, when I come forth a conqueror, I know that I do believe in God, and I know that this faith makes me a partaker of covenant blessings; from this I may fairly argue that my faith is of the right kind.

I find it especially sweet to learn *the great strength of the Lord* in my own weakness. We find out under trial where we are most weak, and just then in answer to prayer strength is given answerable to the need. The Lord suits the help to the hindrance, and puts the plaster on the wound. In the very hour when it is needed the needed grace is given. Does this not tend to breed assurance of faith?

It is a splendid thing to be able to prove even to Satan *the purity of your motives*. That was the great gain of Job. There was no question about his outward conduct, but the question was about his motive. "Ah," says the devil, "he serves God for what he gets out of Him. Hast Thou not set a hedge about him and all that he has? His is cupboard love: he cares nothing for God Himself, he only cares for the reward of his virtue." Well, he is tried, and everything is taken away, and when he cries, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," when he blesses the taking as well as the giving God, then the devil himself could not have the prudence to accuse him again. As to Job's own conscience, it would be quite settled and confirmed as to his pure love to God. My brethren, I reckon that the endurance of every imaginable suffering and trial would be a small price to pay for a settled assurance, which would for ever prevent the possibility of doubt. Never mind the waves if they wash you upon this rock. Therefore, when you are tempted, "Count it all joy" that you are tried, because you will thus receive a proof of your love, a proof of your faith, a proof of your being the true-born children of God.

James says, "*Count it.*" A man requires to be trained to be a good accountant; it is an art which needs to be learned. What muddles some of us would make if we had to settle accounts and manage disbursements and incomings without the aid of a clerk! How we should get entangled with balances and deficits! We could much easier spend money than count it. But when a man once knows the science of book-keeping, and gets into the way of it, he readily arrives at the true position of affairs. He has learned to count, and no error escapes his eye. James gives us a ready reckoner, and teaches us in our troubles how to count. He sets before us a different kind of measure from that which carnal reason would use: the shekel of the sanctuary was very different from the shekel in common commerce, and so is the counting of faith far other than that of human judgment. He bids us take our pen and sit down quickly and write at his correct dictation. You

are going to write down, “Manifold temptations;” that would be so much on the wrong side: but instead thereof he bids you set down the proving of your faith, and this one asset transforms the transaction into a substantial gain. Trials are like a fire; they burn up nothing in us but the dross, and they make the gold all the purer. Put down the testing process as a clear gain, and, instead of being sorry about it, count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials, for this bestows upon you a proof of your faith. So far there is sufficient ground for counting all trials joy. Now, let us go a little further.

III. Let us think of THE PRICELESS VIRTUE WHICH IS PRODUCED BY TRIAL, namely, patience; for the proof of your “faith worketh patience.” Patience! We all have a large stock of it — until we need it, and then we have none. The man who truly possesses patience is the man that has been tried. What kind of patience does he get by the grace of God? First, he obtains *a patience that accepts the trials as from God without a murmur*. Calm resignation does not come all at once; often long years of physical pain, or mental depression, or disappointment in business, or multiplied bereavements, are needed to bring the soul into full submission to the will of the Lord. After much crying the child is weaned; after much chastening the son is made obedient to his Father’s will. By degrees we learn to end our quarrel with God, and to desire that there may not be two wills between God and ourselves, but that God’s will may be our will. Oh, brother, if your troubles work you to that, you are a gainer, I am sure, and you may count them all joy.

The next kind of patience is when experience enables a man *to bear ill-treatment, slander, and injury without resentment*. He feels it keenly, but he bears it meekly. Like his Master, he opens not his mouth to reply, and refuses to return railing for railing. Contrariwise he gives blessing in return for cursing; like the sandal-wood tree which perfumes the axe which cuts it. Blessed is that holy charity which hopeth all things, endureth all things, and is not easily provoked. Ah, friend, if the grace of God by trial shall work in you the quiet patience which never grows angry, and never ceases to love, you may have lost a trifle of comfort, but you have gained a solid weight of character.

The patience which God works in us by tribulation also takes another form, namely, that *of acting without undue haste*. Before wisdom has

balanced our zeal we are eager to serve God all in a hurry, with a rush and a spurt, as if everything must be done within the hour or nothing would ever be accomplished. We set about holy service with somewhat more of preparedness of heart after we have been drilled in the school of trial. We go steadily and resolutely about work for Jesus, knowing what poor creatures we are, and what a glorious Master we serve. The Lord our God is in no hurry because He is strong and wise. In proportion as we grow like the Lord Jesus we shall cast aside disturbance of mind and fury of spirit. His was a grand life-work, but He never seemed to be confused, excited, worried, or hurried, as certain of His people are. He did not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He knew His hour was not yet come, and there were so many days in which He could work, and therefore He went steadily on till He had finished the work which His Father had given Him to do. That kind of patience is a jewel more to be desired than the gem which glitters on the imperial brow. Sometimes we blunder into a deal of mischief, making more haste than speed; and we are sure to do so when we forget to pray, and fail to commit our matters into the Divine hands. We may run with such vehemence that we may stumble, or lose our breath: there may be in our random efforts as much undoing as doing, for want of possessing our souls in patience.

That is a grand kind of patience, too, when *we can wait without unbelief*. Two little words are good for every Christian to learn and to practise — pray and stay. Waiting on the Lord implies both praying and staying. What if the world is not converted this year! What if the Lord Jesus does not come to-morrow! What if still our tribulations are lengthened out! What if the conflict is continued! He that has been tried and by grace has obtained the true profit of his trials, both quietly waits and joyfully hopes for the salvation of God. Patience, brother! Is this high virtue scarce with thee? The Holy Spirit shall bestow it upon thee through suffering.

This patience also takes the shape of *believing without wavering*, in the very teeth of strange providences and singular statements, and perhaps inward misgivings. The established Christian says, “I believe my God, and therefore if the vision tarry I will wait for it. My time is not yet come. I am to have my worst things first and my best things afterwards, and so I sit me down at Jesus’ feet and tarry his leisure.”

Brothers and sisters, if, in a word, we learn *endurance* we have taken a high degree. You look at the weather-beaten sailor, the man who is at home on the sea: he has a bronzed face and mahogany-coloured flesh, he looks as tough as heart of oak, and as hardy as if he were made of iron. How different from us poor landmen. How did the man become so inured to hardship, so able to breast the storm, so that he does not care whether the wind blows south-west or north-west? He can go out to sea in any kind of weather; he has his sea legs on: how did he come to this strength? By doing business in great waters. He could not have become a hardy seaman by tarrying on shore. Now, trial works in the saints that spiritual hardihood which cannot be learned in ease. You may go to school for ever, but you cannot learn endurance there: you may colour your cheek with paint, but you cannot give it that ingrained brown which comes of stormy seas and howling winds. Strong faith and brave patience come of trouble, and a few men in the church who have thus been prepared are worth anything in times of tempest. To reach that condition of firm endurance and sacred hardihood is worth all the expense of all the heaped-up troubles that ever come upon us from above or from beneath. When trial worketh patience we are incalculably enriched. The Lord give us more of this choice grace. As Peter's fish had the money in its mouth, so have sanctified trials spiritual riches for those who endure them graciously.

IV. Lastly, all this works something better still, and this is our fourth head: **THE SPIRITUAL COMPLETENESS PROMOTED.** "That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Brethren, the most valuable thing a man can get in this world is that which has most to do with his truest self. A man gets a good house; well, that is something; but suppose he is in bad health, what is the good of his fine mansion? A man is well clothed and well fed: that is something; but suppose he shivers with ague, and has no appetite through indigestion. That spoils it all. If a man is in robust health this is a far more valuable boon. Health is far more to be prized than wealth, or honour, or learning: we all allow that, but then suppose that a man's innermost self is diseased while his body is healthy, so that he is disgraced by vice or fevered with passion, he is in a poor plight, notwithstanding that he has such a robust frame? The very best thing is that which will make the man himself a better man; make him right, and true, and pure, and holy. When the man himself is better, he has made an unquestionable gain. So, if our afflictions tend, by trying our faith, to breed

patience, and that patience tends to make us into perfect men in Christ Jesus, then we may be glad of trials. Afflictions by God's grace make us all-around men, developing every spiritual faculty, and therefore they are our friends, our helpers, and should be welcomed with "all joy."

Afflictions find out our weak points, and this makes us attend to them. Being tried, we discover our failures, and then going to God about those failures we are helped to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Moreover, our trials, when blessed of God to make us patient, ripen us. I do not know how to explain what I mean by ripening, but there is a sort of mellowness about believers who have endured a great deal of affliction that you never meet in other people. It cannot be mistaken or imitated. A certain measure of sunlight is wanted to bring out the real flavour of fruits, and when a fruit has felt its measure of burning sun it develops a lusciousness which we all delight in. So is it in men and women: a certain amount of trouble appears to be needful to create a certain sugar of graciousness in them, so that they may contain the rich, ripe juice of a gracious character. You must have known such men and such women, and have said to yourselves, "I wish I could be like them, so calm, so quiet, so self-contained, so happy, and when not happy, yet so content not to be happy; so mature in judgment, so spiritual in conversation, so truly ripe." This only comes to those in whom the proof of their faith works experience, and then experience brings forth the fruits of the Spirit. Dear brothers and sisters, there is a certain all-roundness of spiritual manhood which never comes to us except by manifold temptations. Let me attempt to show you what I mean. Sanctified trials produce a *chastened* spirit. Some of us by nature are rough and untender; but after awhile friends notice that the roughness is departing, and they are quite glad to be more gently handled. Ah, that sick chamber did the polishing; under God's grace, that depression of spirit, that loss, that cross, that bereavement, — these softened the natural ruggedness, and made the man meek and lowly, like his Lord. Sanctified trouble has a great tendency to breed *sympathy*, and sympathy is to the church as oil to machinery. A man that has never suffered feels very awkward when he tries to sympathize with a tried child of God. He kindly does his best, but he does not know how to go to work at it; but those repeated blows from the rod make us feel for others who are smarting, and by degrees we are recognized as being the Lord's

anointed comforters, made meet by temptation to succour those who are tempted.

Have you never noticed how tried men, too, when their trouble is thoroughly sanctified, become *cautious and humble*? They cannot speak quite so fast as they used to do: they do not talk of being absolutely perfect, though they are the very men who are Scripturally perfect; they say little about their doings, and much about the tender mercy of the Lord. They recollect the whipping they had behind the door from their Father's hands, and they speak gently to other erring ones. Affliction is the stone which our Lord Jesus throws at the brow of our giant pride, and patience is the sword which cuts off its head.

Those, too, are the kind of people who are most *grateful*. I have known what it is to praise God for the power to move one leg in bed. It may not seem much to you, but it was a great blessing to me. They that are heavily afflicted come to bless God for everything. I am sure that woman who took a piece of bread and a cup of water for her breakfast, and said, "What, all this, and Christ too!" must have been a tried woman, or she would not have exhibited so much gratitude. And that old Puritan minister was surely a tried man, for when his family had only a herring and a few potatoes for dinner, he said, "Lord, we bless Thee that Thou hast ransacked sea and land to find food for us this day." If he had not been a tried man, he might have turned up his nose at the meal, as many do at much more sumptuous fare. Troubled men get to be grateful men, and that is no small thing.

As a rule, where God's grace works, these come to be *hopeful* men. Where others think the storm will destroy the vessel, they can remember storms equally fierce which did not destroy it, and so they are so calm that their courage keeps others from despair.

These men, too, become *unworldly* men. They have had too much trouble to think that they can ever build their nest in this black forest. There are too many thorns in their nest for them to reckon that this can be their home. These birds of paradise take to their wings, and are ready to fly away to the land of unfading flowers.

And these much-tempted ones are frequently *the most spiritual men*, and out of this spirituality comes *usefulness*. Mr. Greatheart, who led the band of pilgrims up to the celestial city, was a man of many trials, or he would

not have been fit to lead so many to their heavenly rest; and you, dear brother, if ever you are to be a leader and a helper, as you would wish to be, in the church of God, it must be by such means as this that you must be prepared for it. Do you not wish to have every virtue developed? Do you not wish to become a perfect man in Christ Jesus? If so, welcome with all joy divers trials and temptations; fly to God with them; bless Him for having sent them: ask Him to help you to bear them with patience, and then let that patience have its perfect work, and so by the Spirit of God you shall become “perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.” May the Comforter bless this word to your hearts, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

IN HIM: LIKE HIM

A Sermon

Delivered on Thursday Evening, May 17th, 1883, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”

— 1 John 2:6

He that *saith* he abideth in him: “ — that is exactly what every Christian does say. He cannot be a Christian unless this be true of him, and be cannot fully enjoy his religion unless he assuredly knows that he is in Christ, and can boldly say as much. We must be in Christ, and abidingly in Christ, or else We are not saved in the Lord. It is our union with the Christ that makes us Christians: by union with him as our life we truly live, — live in the favour of God. — We are in Christ, dear brethren, as the manslayer was in the city of refuge: I hope that we can say we abide in him as our sanctuary and shelter. We have fled for refuge to him who is the hope set before us in the gospel; even as David and his men sheltered themselves in the eaves of En-gedi, so we hide ourselves in Christ. We each one sing, and our heart goes with the words

“Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.”

We have entered into Christ as into the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, as guest; into a banquet-hall, as returning travellers into their home.

And now we abide — in Christ in this sense, that we are joined to him: as the stone is, in the wall, as the wave is in the sea, as the branch is in the vine, so are we in Christ. As the branch receives all its sap from the stem, so all the sap of spiritual life flows from Christ into us. If we were separated from him, we should be as branches cut off from the vine, only fit to be gathered up for the fire, and to be burned. So that we abide in Christ as our shelter, our home, and our life. Today we remain in Christ, and hope for ever to remain in him, as our Head. Ours is no transient union; while he lives as our Head we shall remain his members. We are nothing apart from him. As a finger is nothing without the head, as the whole body is nothing without the head, so should we be nothing without our Lord Jesus Christ. But we are in him vitally, and therefore we dare ask the question, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?”

Beloved, since we, then, are the people who say that we abide in him, it is upon us that the obligation of the text falls: we ought ourselves also so to walk even as he walked. A Bible *ought* has great weight with a conscientious man. Ought it to be so? Then it shall be so, God helping me. If we say we must *do*. If we talk, we must walk, or it will, be mere talk. If we make the profession of abiding in Christ, we must prove it by our practice of walking with Christ. If we say that we are in Christ and abide in him, we must take care that our life and character are conformed to Christ, or else we shall be making an empty boast. This is true of every man who says he is in Christ, for the text is put in the most general and absolute manner: be the man old or young, rich or poor, learned or simple, pastor or hearer, it is incumbent upon him to live *like* Christ if he professes to live *in* Christ.

The first thing about a Christian is initiation, initiation into Christ: the next thing is imitation, the imitation of Christ. We cannot be Christians unless we are in Christ; and we are not truly in Christ unless in him we live and move and have our being, and the life of Christ is lived over again by us according to our measure. “Be ye imitators of God, as dear children.” It is the nature of children to imitate their parents. Be ye imitators; of Christ as good soldiers, who cannot have a better model for their soldierly life than their Captain and Lord. Ought we not to be very grateful to Christ that he deigns to be our example? If he were not perfectly able to meet all our

other wants, if he were an expiation and nothing else, we should glory in him as our atoning sacrifice, for we always put that to the front, and magnify the virtue of his precious blood beyond everything; but at the same time we need an example, and it is delightful to find it where we find our pardon and justification. They that are saved from the death of sin need to be guided in the life of holiness, and it is infinitely condescending on the part of Christ that he becomes an example to such poor creatures as we are. It is said to have been the distinguishing mark of Caesar as a soldier that he never said to his followers “Go!” but he always said “Come!” Of Alexander, also, it was noted that in weary marches he was sure to be on foot with his warriors, and in fierce attack’s he always was in the van. The most persuasive sermon is the example which leads the way. This certainly is one trait in the Good Shepherd’s character, “when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them.” If Jesus bids us do anything, he first does it himself. He would have us wash one another’s feet; and this is the argument — “Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Shall we not do as he does whom we profess to follow? He has left his footprints that we may set our feet in them. Will we not joyfully fix our feet upon this royal road?

That is our theme at this time. We do many of us say that we are in Christ: let us hear how obliged we are by this to walk even as he walked. Oh, Holy Spirit, let us feel the weight of the sacred obligation!

But I stop a minute. I know that there are some here who cannot say that they are in Christ. Then, if you are not in Christ, you are out of Christ; and out of Christ your position is dangerous, terrible, ruinous. If we saw a man hanging over a deep pit, if we saw a man exposed to a sea of fire, and likely to perish in it, all our tenderest emotions would begin to flow, and we should pray in an agony of spirit, “Oh, God, save this man from danger!” My brethren, there are some among us tonight who are in the utmost danger; in a most emphatic sense they are lost already, for they are without God, and without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. Oh, my hearers, how shall I speak of you without tears? Poor souls, abiding under the wrath of God! Poor souls! The mercy is that you are not past hope. There is an arm that can reach you: there is a voice that calls you — calls you even now; hear it: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all

the ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is none else.” Can you not even now give one look to him who died for you? Will you not turn the eye of faith that way, and trust him who was nailed to the tree on your behalf? God grant that you may, and then I may include you also in the blessed instruction of the text. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”

I. I shall first of all ask you to **CONSIDER HOW THIS OBLIGATION IS PROVED.** Let us spend a few minutes over the question, Why ought we to walk as Jesus did?

When we read the word “ought,” if we are honest men, we begin to look about us and to make enquiries as to the reason and the measure of this obligation. An “ought” is a compulsion to a true heart. There is a “needs be” to every godly man that he should do what he ought.

What, then, is the ground upon which this “ought” is fixed?

First, *it is the design of God* that those who are in Christ should walk as Christ walked. It is a part of the original covenant purpose; for “whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” That is the drift of the plan of grace, the aim of the covenant. Grace looks towards holiness, that there should be a people called forth to whom Christ should be the elder brother, the firstborn among many brethren. You certainly have not had the purpose of God fulfilled in you, dear friend, unless you have been conformed to the image of his dear Son. “He hath chosen us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” This is the aim of election; this is the object of redemption; this is the fruit of calling; this is the concomitant of justification; this is the evidence of adoption; this is the earnest of glory; that we should be holy, even as Christ is holy, and in this respect should wear the lineaments of the Son of God. He hath given his own Son to die for us, that we may die to sin; he has given him to live that we may live like him. In every one of us the Father desires to see Christ, that so Christ may be glorified in every one of us. Do you not feel this to be an imperative necessity to be laid upon you? Would you have the Lord miss his purpose? You are chosen of God to this end, that you should be “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,

zealous of good works,” and what is this but that you should walk even as he walked? Observe,

again, another point of this necessity: *it is necessary to the mystical Christ* that we should walk as he walked, for we are joined unto the Lord Jesus in one body. Now, Christ cannot be made a monster that would be a blasphemous notion. And yet if any man had eyes, ears, hands, or other members that were not conformable to the head, he would be a strange being. The mouth of a lion, the eye of an ox, the feathers of a bird — these things would have no consistency with the head of a man. We read of the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, that it had a head of fine gold, but legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay. Surely, Christ’s spiritual body is not compounded of such discordant elements. No, no. He must be all of a piece. The mystical body must be the most beautiful and precious production of God; for the church is Christ’s body, “the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” And shall that mysterious fulness be something defiled, deformed, full of sin, subject to Satan? God forbid! “As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy,” and as your HEAD is holy, so be ye, as members of his body, holy too. Ought it not to be so? Does anybody raise a question? Does not every member of Christ, by the very fact that he is joined to him by living union, feel at once that he must walk even as Christ walked?

And this, beloved, again, must all be *the fruit of the one Spirit that is in Christ and in us*. The Father anointed Christ of old with the same anointing, which rests on us in our measure. The Holy Spirit descended upon him, and rested upon him, and we have an unction from the same Holy One. The Spirit of God has anointed all the chosen of God who are regenerated, and he dwelleth with them and in them. Now, the Spirit of God in every case works to the same result. It cannot be supposed that the Spirit of God in any case produces unholiness: the thought were blasphemy. The fruit of the Spirit is everything that is delightful, right, and good towards God, and generous towards man. The Spirit of God, wherever He works, works according to the mind of God; and God is hymned as “Holy, holy, holy,” by those pure spirits who know him best. He is altogether without spot or trace of sin, and so shall we be when the Spirit’s work is done. If, then, the Spirit of God dwell in you (and if it do

not, you are not in Christ), it must work in you conformity to Christ that you should walk even as he walked.

Perhaps further argument is not needed; but I would have true Christians remember that this is *one article of the agreement which we make with Christ when we become his disciples*. It is taken for granted that when we enter the service of Jesus we by that act and deed undertake by his help to follow his example. “Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” You know, if any man love Christ, he must follow him: — “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” When we took Christ’s cross to be our salvation we took it also to be our heavenly burden. When we yielded ourselves up to Christ to be saved by him, we in spirit renounced every sin. We felt that we had come out from under the yoke of Satan, and that we made no reserve for the lusts of the flesh that we might obey them, but bowed our necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. We put ourselves into Christ’s hands unreservedly, and we said, “Lord, sanctify me, and then use me. Take my body and all its members; take my mind and all its faculties; take my spirit and all the new powers which thou hast bestowed upon me with it; and let all these be thine. Reign in me; rule me absolutely, sovereignly, always and alone. I do not ask to be my own, for I am not my own, I am bought with a price.” After we have learned the grand truth that, “if one died for all, then all died,” we infer that “Christ died for all, that we that live might not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and rose again.” Are we not, then, to be true to this blessed compact? “I do remember my faults this day,” says one. Ay, but remember also the vows that still engage you. Do not desire to escape from the sacred bond. ‘This day remember the Lord to whom you dedicated yourself in the days of your youth, perhaps long, years ago, and again entreat him to take full possession of the purchased possession, and hold it against all comers, for ever. So it ought to be. He that says, “I am in him” ought also so to walk even as he walked. Obey the sacrifice of Jesus, yield yourselves as living sacrifices; by your hope of being saved by him put your whole being into his hands to love and serve him all your days.

For, once more, inasmuch as we are in Christ, we are now bound to live to Christ’s glory, and this is a great means of glorifying Christ. What can we

do to glorify Christ if we do not walk even as he walked? If I came and preached to you, and if I had the tongues of men and of angels, yet if I did not seek to do as my Master did, what avails all that I can say? It is but “sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.” You know what men say to unholy preachers: they bid them be silent or be consistent. Unholy ministers are a derision, and a scoff, and a by-word. And so it is with unholy Christians, too. You may teach your children at home, or teach them in the Sunday-school class; but if they see your lives to be Christless, prayerless, godless, they will not learn any good from you. They will rather learn from what you *do* amiss, than from what you *say* that is right. Do you blame them that it is so? Are not actions far more forcible than words? Suppose you church-members are unjust in your trade; suppose that in your common conversation you are loose; suppose that in your acts you are licentious or untrue; what does the world say of your Christianity? Why, it becomes to them a thing of contempt. They sniff at it. It is so much dung and sweepings of the street to them, and so it ought to be. In the early ages some of the worst opponents of Christianity used to wing their shafts with the inconsistencies of Christian professors, and they were wise in their generation. One of them said, “Where is that catholic holiness of which we have often heard so much?” and another said, “We heard of these people that they love their Christ, and love other men so that they would even die for love of their brethren; but many of them do not love as well as the heathen whom they despise.” I dare say there was a good deal of slander and scandal in what they said; but I am also afraid that, if it were said today, there would be a vast deal of sorrowful truth in it. Christian love is by no means so plentiful as it might be, nor holy living, either. Is not this the thing that weakens the preaching, of the gospel — the want of living the gospel? If all the professed Christians who live in London really walked as Christ walked, would not the salt have more effect upon the corrupt mass than the stuff which is now called salt seems to have? We preach here in the pulpit; but what can we do, unless you preach yonder at home? It is you preaching in your shops, in your kitchens, in your nurseries, in your parlours, in the streets, which will tell on the masses. This is the preaching — the best preaching in the world, for it is seen as well as heard. I heard one say he liked to see men preach with their feet; and this is it, “they ought also so to walk even as Christ walked.” No testimony excels that which is borne in ordinary life. Christ

ought to be glorified by us, and therefore we ought to be like him, for if we are not, we cannot glorify him, but must dishonor him.

Now, that is my first point. Consider how this obligation is proved, and when you have weighed the argument pray the Holy Ghost to make you yield to its gentle pressure.

II. Now, secondly, CONSIDER WHEREIN THIS WALKING WITH CHRIST AS HE WALKED CONSISTS. Here is a wide subject. I have a sea before me with as much sailing, room as Noah in the ark. I can only just point out the direction in which you should sail if you would make a prosperous voyage.

First, brothers to put it all together in one word, the first thing that every Christian has to see to is *holiness*. I will not try at any great length to explain what that word means, but it always sounds to me as if it explained itself. You know what wholeness is — a thing, without a crack, or flaw, or break; complete, entire, uninjured, whole. Well, that is the main meaning of holy. The character of God is perfectly holy; in it nothing is lacking; nothing is redundant. When a thing, is complete it is whole, and this applied to moral and spiritual things gives you the inner meaning of “holy.” When a man is healthy, perfectly healthy, in spirit, soul, and body, then he is perfectly holy; for sin is a moral disorder, and righteousness is the right state of every faculty. The man whose spiritual health is altogether right is right towards God, right towards himself, right towards men, right towards time, right towards eternity. He is right towards the first table of the law, and right towards the second table. He is an all-round man; he is a whole man, a holy man. Truth is within him; truth is spoken by him; truth is acted by him. Righteousness is in him; he thinks the right thing, and chooses that which is according to the law of uprightness. There is justice in him; he abhors that which is evil. There is goodness in him; he follows after that which will benefit his fellow-men. I cannot spare time to tell you all that the word “holy” means; but if you wish to see holiness, look at Christ. In him you see a perfect character, an all-round character. He is the perfect one; be ye like him in all holiness.

We must go a little into detail; so I say, next, one main point in which we ought to walk according to the walk of our great Exemplar is *obedience*. Our Lord Jesus Christ took upon himself the form of a servant; and what

service it was that he rendered! "He was a son; yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." And what obedience that dear Son of God rendered to the Father! He did not come to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. He yielded himself up to come under law to God, and to do the Father's will. Now in this respect we ought also to walk even as he walked. We have not come into the world to do what we like, to possess what we choose, or to say, "That is my notion, and therefore so shall it be." Sin promised freedom, and brought us bondage; grace now binds us, and ensures us liberty. Obedience is the law of every spiritual nature. It is the Lord's will that in his house his word should be the supreme law, for so only can our fallen natures be restored to their original glory. Set the wandering stars in their spheres, and rule them by the majestic sway of the sun, and then they will keep their happy estate, but not else.

Understanding, heart, life, lip, everything, is now to enter into the service of God, even the Father, and it is to be ours to say, "Lord, show me what thou wouldest have me to do." Surely, beyond any other quality, we see in the career of the Son of God the perfection of self-abnegation. No man was ever so truly free as Jesus, and yet no man was so fully subservient to the heavenly will. Never saw these seas a pilot so able to steer according to his own judgment, and never one so carefully to follow the channel as marked down in the chart. His was the unique originality of absolute obedience. Dear friends, you see how it ought to be with you also. It is ours to walk in cheerful subservience to the mind of the Father, even as Jesus did. Does this strike you as an easy thing? It is child's work, certainly; but assuredly it is not child's play.

Such a life would necessarily be one of great *activity*, for the life of Jesus was intensely energetic. The life of Christ was as full as it could hold. After he had been developed and disciplined by thirty years of seclusion, he showed himself among men as one moved to vehemence with love: "he was clad with zeal as with a cloak." From the day of his baptism till his death he went about doing good. It is wonderful what was packed into about three years: each action had a world of meaning within its own self, and there were thousands of such acts; each sermon was a complete revelation, and every day heard him pour forth such sermons. His biography is made up of the essence of life. Some one remarks that it is wonderful that he did not begin his active life when he was younger. We reply, that it is beautiful that he did not, because he was not called to it,

and he was best obeying the Father by living in obscurity. Those thirty years at Nazareth were thirty wonderful years of obedience — obedience; tested by obscurity, patience, restraint, and perhaps dulness. Who among us would find such obedience easy? Would we not far rather rush into notice and make to ourselves a name? Some of us, perhaps, never learned the obedience of being quiet — but it is a wonderful one. Oh, for more of it! Do we know the obedience of being hidden when our light seems needed? — the obedience of going into the desert for forty years, like Moses, with nothing, to do but wait upon God till God shall put us in commission? There is a wonderful service in waiting till the order comes for us actively to be at it. Samuel said, “To obey is better than sacrifice;” it is in fact better than anything which we can possibly present to God. But when our Lord was at length loosed from his obscurity, with what force he sped along his life-way. How he spent himself! It was a candle burning not only at both ends, but altogether. He not only had zeal burning at his heart, but, like a sheet of flame, it covered him from head to foot. There is never an idle hour in the life of Christ. It is wonderful how he sustained the toil. Perhaps he measured out his zeal and his open industry by the fact that he was only to be for a short time here below. It might not be possible to others that they should do as much as he did in so short a space, because they are intended to live longer here, and must not destroy future usefulness by present indiscretion: but still, activity was the rule of our Master’s existence. At it, always at it, altogether at it, spending and being spent for his Father; such was his mode of walking, among, men. Oh, friends, if we, indeed, are in him, we ought also so to walk even. as he walked! Wake up, you lazy ones!

Next, we ought to walk as Christ did in the matter of *self-denial*. Of course, in this work of self-denial we are not called to imitate Christ in offering up ourselves as a propitiatory sacrifice. That would be a vain intrusion into things which are his peculiar domain. The self-denials which we practise should be such as he prescribes us. There is a will-worship which is practised in the Church of Rome of self-denials which are absurd, and must, I think, be hateful in the sight of God rather than pleasing to him. Saint Bernard was a man whom I admire to the last degree, and I count him to be one of the Lord’s choice ones; yet in the early part of his life there is no doubt that he lessened his powers of usefulness to a large extent by the emaciation which he endured, and the way in which he

brought himself to death's door. At times he was incapable of activity by reason of the weakness which he had incurred through fasting, and colds and exposure, There is no need to inflict useless torture upon the body. When did the Saviour thus behave himself? Point me to a single mortification of a needless kind. Enough self-denials come naturally in every Christian man's way to make him try whether he can deny himself in very deed for the Lord's sake. You are thus tested when you are put in positions where you might get gain by an unrighteous act, or win fame by withholding a truth, or earn love and honour by pandering to the passions of those about you. May you have grace enough to say, "No; it cannot be. I love not myself, but my Lord. I seek not myself, but Christ. I desire to propagate nothing but his truth, and not my own ideas": then will you have exhibited the self-denial of Jesus. These self-denials will sometimes be hard to flesh and blood. And then in the Church of God to be able to give all your substance, to devote all your time, to lay out all your ability — this is to walk as Jesus walked. When weary and worn, still to be busy; to deny, yourself things which may be allowable, but which if allowable to you would be dangerous to others — this also is like the Lord. Such self-denial as may be helpful to the weak you ought to practise. Think what Christ would do in such a case, and do it; and, whenever you can glorify him by denying yourself, do it. So walk as he did who made himself of no reputation, but took upon himself the form of a servant. and who, though he was rich, brought himself down to poverty for our sakes, that we might be rich unto God. Think of that.

Another point in which we ought to imitate Christ most certainly is that of *lowliness*. I wish that all Christians did this. When I see some Christian women dressed out — well, like women of the world, though not with half a worldling's taste, and when I see men so big that they cannot speak to poor people, as if they were made of something better than ordinary flesh and blood; when I notice a haughty, high, hectoring disposition anywhere, it grates upon my feelings, and makes me wonder whether these blunderers hope to go to the heaven of the lowly. The Lord Jesus would never have been half as big as some of his followers are. What great folk some of his disciples are, as compared with him! He was lowly, meek, gentle, a man who so loved the souls of others that he forgot himself. You never detect in the Lord Jesus Christ any tendency towards pride or self-exaltation.

Quite the reverse: he is ever compassionate and condescending to men of low estate.

And then note again another point, and that is his great *tenderness*, and gentleness, and readiness to forgive. His dying words ought to ring in the ear of all who find it hard to pass by affronts, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Did he not set us an example of bearing and forbearing? "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again." For every curse he gave a blessing,. You cannot be Christians if this spirit of love is foreign to you. "Oh," say you, "we endorse the confession." I do not care. You must love your enemies, or you will die with the Creed in your throats. "Oh," say you, "we are regular in our pews, hearing the gospel." I do not care; you must forgive them that trespass against you, or you will go from your pews to perdition "Oh, but we have been baptized, and we come to the communion." I do not care even about that; for unless you are made meek and lowly in heart you will not find rest unto your souls. Pride goeth not before salvation, but before destruction; and a haughty spirit is no prophecy of elevation, but the herald of a fall. Take care, take care, you that say that you are in Christ; you ought also to walk in all the lowliness and in all the tenderness of Christ, or else at the end you will be discovered to be none of his. Hard, cruel, unrelenting, iron-hearted professors will no more go to heaven than the hogs they fatten.

There is one little big word which tells us more than all this about how Christ walked, and that is the word "*love*." Jesus was incarnate love. "God is love," but God is a spirit, therefore if you wish to see love embodied, look at Christ. He loves the little children, and suffers them to come to him. He loves the widow, and he is tender to her, and raises her dead son. He loves the sinners, and they draw near to him. He loves all sinful and tempted and tried ones, and therefore he comes to seek and to save. He loves the Father first, and then for the Father's sake he loves the myriads of men. Do you love nobody? Do you live within yourself? Are you immured within your own ribs? Is self all your world? Then you will go to hell. There is no help for it; for the place of unloving spirits is the bottomless pit. Only he that loves can live in heaven, for heaven is love: and you cannot go to glory unless you have learned to love, and to find it your very life to do good to those about you.

Let me add to all this, that he who says that Christ is in him ought also to live as Christ lived in secret. And how was this?

His life was spent in abounding *devotion*. Ah, me! I fear I shall condemn some here when I remind them of the hymn we just now sang —

“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervour of his prayer.”

If the perfect Christ could not live without prayer, how can such poor imperfect ones as we are live without it? He had no sin within him, and yet he had need to pray. He was pure and holy, and yet he must needs wait upon God all day long, and often speak with his Father; and then when the night came, and others went to their beds, he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. If the Lord Jesus be in you, you must walk as he walked in that matter.

And, then, think of his delight in God. How wonderful was Christ's *delight in his God*! I can never think of his life as an unhappy one. He was, it is true, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”; but still there was a deep spring of wondrous happiness in the midst of his heart, which made him always blessed; for he said to his Father, “I delight to do thy will, O my God! Yea, thy law is within heart.” He delighted in God. Many a sweet night he spent in those prayer-times of his in fellowship with the Father. Why, it was that which prepared him for the agony of his bloody sweat, and for the “Why hast thou forsaken me?” Those love-visits, those near and dear communings which his holy heart had with the Father were his secret meat and drink. And you and I also must delight in God. This charming duty is far too much neglected. Strange that this honey should so seldom be in men's mouths! Listen to this text, “Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” Many a man says, “I should like to have the desires of my heart” Brother, here is the royal road thereto, the King's ascent to his treasury — “Delight thyself also in the Lord.” But, listen. it is very likely you would not obtain the desire that is now in your heart if you did that; for he that delights himself in God rises above the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and comes to desire that which God desires, and therefore it is that he wins the desire of his heart. But, oh, the pleasure, the joy, the bliss of delighting in God! How

many times have I sung to myself that last dear stanza of the psalm,
wherein the inspired poet sings —

“For yet I know I shall him praise,
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yea, mine own God is he.”

Oh, what a pleasure! “Mine own God is he.” Rich men glory in wealth, famous men in valour, great men in honour, and I in “mine own God.” There is nothing about God but what is delightful to a saint. The infinite God is infinitely delightful to his people. Once get really to know God and to be like him, and even his sternest attributes — his power, his justice, his indignation against sin — will come to be delightful to you. Those men who are cavilling at what God does, questioning over what God has revealed, do not know him, for to know him is to adore him. Oh, brethren, let us find our pleasure, our treasure, our heaven, our all, in the Lord our God, even as our Lord Jesus did. In this thing let us walk even as he walked.

I have not quite done. Dear friends, we ought to walk in holy *contentment*. Jesus was perfectly content with his lot. When the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, and he had not where to lay his head, yet he never murmured, but found rest in pursuing his life-work. The cravings of covetousness and pinings of ambition never touched our Lord. Friends, if you do, indeed, say that you abide in him, I pray you be of the same contented spirit. “I have learned,” said the apostle, as if it were a thing which had to be taught, “in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

In a word, Christ lived above this world; let us walk as he walked. Christ lived for God, and for God alone; let us live after his fashion. And Christ persevered in such living; he never turned aside from it at all; but as he lived so he died, still serving his God, obedient to his Father’s will, even unto death. May our lives be a mosaic of perfect obedience, and our deaths the completion of the fair design. From our Bethlehem to our Gethsemane may our walk run parallel with the pathway of the Well-beloved! Oh, Holy Spirit, work us to this sacred pattern!

III. I close now by saying, in the last place, consider, dear friends, WHAT IS NEEDFUL TO ALL THIS.

First, it is needful to have *a nature like that of Christ*. You cannot give out sweet waters so long as the fountains are impure. “Ye must be born again.” There is no walking with Jesus in newness of life unless we have a new heart and a right spirit. See to it, dear friends, that your nature is renewed — that the Holy Ghost has wrought in you a resurrection from among the dead; for, if not, your walk and conversation will savour of death and corruption. A new creature is essential to likeness to Christ: it is not possible that the carnal mind should wear the image of Jesus.

That being done, the next thing that is necessary is *a constant anointing of the Holy Spirit*. Can any Christian here do without the Holy Spirit? Then I am afraid that he is no Christian. But, as for us, we feel every day that we must cry for a fresh visitation of the Spirit, a renewed sense of indwelling, a fresh anointing from the Holy One of Israel, or else we cannot walk as Christ walked.

And then, again, there must be in us a *strong resolve* that we will walk as Christ walked; for our Lord himself did not lead in that holy life without stern resolution. He set his face like a flint that he would do the right; and he did the right. Do not, I pray you, be led astray by thoughtlessly following your fellow-men: it is a poor, sheepish business, that running in crowds. Dare to be singular dare to stand alone. Stand to it firmly that you will follow Christ. A Christian man in a discussion attempted to defend the truth, but his opponent grew angry, and cried out vehemently again and again, “Hear me! Hear me!” At last the good man answered, “No, I shall not hear you, nor shall you hear me; but let us both sit down and hear the word of the Lord.” And that is the thing to do, brethren, to be hearing Christ and following *him*; not I to learn of you, nor you of me, but both of Christ: so shall we end all controversy in a blessed agreement at his feet. God help us to get there.

And so, once again, I add that if we want to walk as Christ walked, we must have much *communion with him*. We cannot possibly get to be like Christ except by being with him. I wish that we could rise to be so much like the Saviour that we should resemble a certain ancient saint who died a martyr’s death, to whom the world said, “What are you?” He said, “I am a

Christian.” They asked,, What trade do you follow?” And he said, “I am a Christian.” They inquired, “What language do you speak?” And he said, “I am a Christian.” “But what treasures have you?” said they; and he replied, “I am a Christian.” They asked him what friends he had, and he said, “I am a Christian;” for all he was, and all he had, and all he wished to be, and all he hoped to be, were all wrapped up in Christ. If you live with Christ you will be absorbed by him, and he will embrace the whole of your existence: and, in consequence, your walk will be like his.

Take care that you do not in all things copy any but Christ; for if I set my watch by the watch of one of my friends, and he sets his watch by that of another friend, we may all be wrong together. If we shall, each one, take his time from the sun, we shall all be right. There is nothing like going to the fountain-head. Take your lessons in holiness, not from a poor erring disciple, but from the infallible Master. God help you to do go.

A person has written to me this morning to say that he has painted my portrait, but that he cannot finish it until he sees me. I should think not. Certainly you cannot paint a portrait of Christ in your own life unless you see him — see him clearly, see him continually. You may have it general notion of what Christ is like, and you may put a good deal of colour into your copy; but I am sure you will fail unless you see the grand original. You *must* get to commune with Jesus. You know what we did when we went to school. Our schoolmasters were not quite so wise then as schoolmasters are now. They wrote at the top of the page a certain line for us to follow, and a poor following it was. When I wrote my first line I copied the writing-master’s model, but when I wrote the next line I copied my copy of the top line; so that when I reached the bottom of the page I produced a copy of my copy of my copy of my copy of the top line. Thus my handwriting fed upon itself, and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse. So one man copies Christ, perhaps; a friend who hears him preach copies *him*, and his wife at home copies the hearer, and somebody copies her; and so it goes on all down the line, till we all miss that glorious hand-writing which Jesus has come to teach us. Keep your eye on Christ, dear brother. Never mind me: never mind your friend: never mind the old doctor that you have been hearing so long. Look to Jesus, and to him alone. We have had our sects and our divisions all through that coping of the lines of the boys, instead of looking to the top-line that the Master wrote. “He

that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked” May the Spirit of God cause us to do it! Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.-1 John 2.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK.”

— 425, 262, 646.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM

A Sermon

Delivered on Thursday Evening, June 14th, 1883, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

— Luke 24:47

The servants of God were not left to originate a gospel for themselves, as certain modern teachers appear to do, nor were they even left to map out their mode of procedure in the spreading of the glad tidings. They were told by their great Master *what to preach*, and *where to preach it*, and *how to preach it*, and even where to begin to preach it. There is ample room for the exercise of our thought in obeying Christ's commands; but the worldly wise in these days call no one a thoughtful person who is content to be a docile follower of Jesus. They call themselves “thoughtful and cultured” simply because they set up their own thoughts in opposition to the thoughts of God. It were well if they would remember the old proverb — “Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips.” As a rule those who call themselves “intellectual” are by no means persons of great intellect. Great minds seldom proclaim their own greatness. These boasters are not satisfied to be “followers of God, as dear children,” but must strike out a path for themselves; this reveals their folly rather than their culture. We shall find use for every faculty which we possess, even if we are endowed with ten talents, in doing just as we are bidden by our Lord. Implicit obedience is not thoughtless: on the contrary,

it is necessary to its completeness that heart and mind should be active in it.

I. Ye that would faithfully serve Christ note carefully how he taught his disciples **WHAT THEY WERE TO PREACH**. We find different descriptions of the subject of our preaching, but on this occasion it is comprised in two things — *repentance and remission of sins*. I am glad to find in this verse that old-fashioned virtue called *repentance*. It used to be preached, but it has gone out of fashion now. Indeed, we are told that we always misunderstood the meaning of the word “repentance”; and that it simply means a “change of mind,” and nothing more. I wish that those who are so wise in their Greek knew a little more of that language, for they would not be so ready with their infallible statements. True, the word does signify a change of mind, but in its Scriptural connection it indicates a change of mind of an unusual character. It is not such a fitful thing as men mean when they speak of changing their minds, as some people do fifty times a day; but it is a change of mind of a deeper kind. Gospel repentance is a change of mind of the most radical sort — such a change as never was wrought in any man except by the Spirit of God. We mean to teach repentance, the old-fashioned repentance, too; and I do not know a better description of it than the child’s verse: —

“Repentance is to leave
The things we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve
By doing so no more.”

Let every man understand that he will never have remission of sin while he is in love with sin; and that if he abides in sin he cannot obtain the pardon of sin. There must be a hatred of sin, a loathing of it, and a turning from it, or it is not blotted out. We are to preach *repentance as a duty*. “The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” He that has sinned is bound to repent of having sinned: it is the least that he can do. How can any man ask God for mercy while he abides in his sin?

We are to preach *the acceptableness of repentance*. In itself considered there is nothing in repentance deserving of the favour of God; but, the Lord

Jesus Christ having come, we read, “He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy.” God accepts repentance for the sake of his dear Son. He smiles upon the penitent sinner, and puts away his iniquities. this we are to make known on all sides.

We are also to preach *the motives of repentance* — that men may not repent from mere fear of hell, but they must repent of sin itself. Every thief is sorry when he has to go to prison: every murderer is sorry when the noose is about his neck: the sinner must repent, not because of the punishment of sin, but because his sin is sin against a pardoning God, sin against a bleeding Saviour, sin against a holy law, sin against a tender gospel. The true penitent repents of sin against God, and he would do so even if there were no punishment. When he is forgiven, he repents of sin more than ever; for he sees more clearly than ever the wickedness of offending so gracious a God.

We are to preach *repentance in its perpetuity*. Repentance is not a grace which is only to be exercised by us for a week or so at the beginning of our Christian career: it is to attend us all the way to heaven. Faith and repentance are to be inseparable companions throughout our pilgrimage to glory. Repenting of our sin, and trusting in the great Sinbearer, is to be the tenor of our lives; and we are to preach to men that it must be so.

We are to tell them of *the source of repentance*, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted on high to *give* repentance and remission of sins. Repentance is a plant that never grows on nature’s dunghill: the nature must be changed, and repentance must be implanted by the Holy Spirit, or it will never flourish in our hearts. We preach repentance as a fruit of the Spirit, or else we greatly err.

Our second theme is to be *remission of sins*. What a blessed subject is this! To preach the full pardon of sin — that it is blotted out once for all; the free pardon of sin — that God forgives voluntarily of his own grace; free forgiveness for the very chief of sinners for all their sins, however black they may be; is not this a grand subject? We are to preach a final and irreversible remission; not a pardon which is given and taken back again, so that a man may have his sins forgiven and yet be punished for them. I loathe such a gospel as that, and could not preach it. It would come with an ill grace from these lips. But the pardon of God once given stands for

ever. If he has cast our sin into the depths of the sea it will never be washed up again. If he has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west, how can they return to condemn us? Once washed in the blood of the Lamb we are clean. The deed is done: the one offering has put away for ever all the guilt of believers.

Now this is what we are to preach — free, full, irreversible pardon for all that repent of sin, and lay hold on Christ by faith. O servants of the Lord, be not ashamed to declare it, for this is your message!

II. Next to this, we are told WHERE IT IS TO BE PREACHED. The text says that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name *among all nations*. Here, then, we have the divine warrant for missions. They are no speculations, or enthusiastic dreams; they are matters of divine command. I daresay you have heard of what the Duke of Wellington said to a missionary in India who was questioning whether it was of any use to preach the gospel to the Hindus. “What are your marching orders?” said this man of discipline and obedience. “What are your marching orders?” that is the deciding question. Now the marching orders are, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” What a wonder it is that the church did not see this long before. After her first days she seems to have fallen asleep, and it is scarcely a hundred years ago since in the providence and grace of God the church began to wake to her high enterprise. We are to preach the gospel everywhere: missions are to be universal. All nations need the preaching of the word. The gospel is a remedy for every human ill among all the races that live upon the face of the earth. Some out of all nations shall receive it; for there shall be gathered before the eternal throne men out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue. No nation will utterly refuse it: there will be found a remnant according to the election of grace even among the most perverse of the tribes of men.

We ought to preach it to every creature, for it is written that it behoved to be so. Read the forty-sixth verse: “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:... and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations.” Brethren, there was a divine necessity that Christ should die, and an equally imperative *must* that he should arise again from the dead; but there is an equally absolute necessity that Jesus should be preached to every creature under heaven. It behooves to be so. Who, then, will linger? Let us

each one, according to his ability and opportunity, tell to all around us the story of the forgiveness of sin through the Mediator's sacrifice to as many as confess their sin and forsake it. We are bidden to preach repentance of sin and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, let us not be slow to do so.

III. But this is not all. We are actually told **HOW TO PREACH IT**.

Repentance and remission are to be preached *in Christ's name*. What does this mean? Ought we not to learn from this that we are to tell the gospel to others, because *Christ orders us to do so*? In Christ's name we *must* do it. Silence is sin when salvation is the theme. If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out against them. My brethren, you must proclaim the gospel according to your ability: it is not a thing which you may do or may not do at your own discretion; but you *must* do it if you have any respect for your Saviour's name. If you dare pray in that name, if you dare hope in that name, if you hear the music of joy in that name, then in the name of Jesus Christ preach the gospel in every land.

But it means more than that. Not only preach it under his orders, but preach it *on his authority*. The true servant of Christ has his Master to back him up. The Lord Jesus will seal by threatening or by grace the word of his faithful messengers. If we threaten the ungodly, the threatening shall be fulfilled. If we announce God's promise to the penitent, that promise shall be surely kept. The Lord Jesus will not let the words of his own ambassadors fall to the ground. "Lo, I am with you always," says he, "even to the end of the world. Go ye therefore and teach all nations." You have Christ with you: teach the nations by his authority.

But does it not mean, also, that *the repentance and the remission which are so bound together come to men by virtue of his name*? Oh, sinner, there would be no acceptance of your repentance if it were not for that dear name! Oh, guilty conscience, there would be no ease for you through the remission of sin if it were not that the blessed name of Jesus is sweet to the Lord God of hosts! We dare preach pardon to you in his name. The blood has been shed and sprinkled on the burning throne: the Christ has gone in within the veil, and stands there "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Salvation in his name there is assuredly, and this is our glory; but "there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." That name has a fullness of saving efficacy,

and if you will but rest in it, you shall find salvation, and find it now. Thus you see we are not bidden to go forth and say — We preach you the gospel in the name of our own reason; or we preach you the gospel in the name of the church to which we belong, or by the authority of a synod, or a bishop, or a creed, or a whole church. No, we declare the truth in the name of Christ. Christ has set his honour to pawn for the truth of the gospel. He will lose his glory if sinners that believe and repent are not saved. Dishonour will come to the Son of God if any man repenting of sin is not accepted before God. For his name's sake he will not cast away one that comes to him. O chief of sinners! he will receive you if you will come. He cannot reject you; that were to be false to his own promise, untrue to his own nature.

Be sure then that you preach in Christ's name. If you preach in your own name it is poor work. A man says to me, "I cannot tell a dead sinner to live. I cannot tell a blind sinner to see. I cannot invite an insensible sinner; it is absurd; for the sinner is altogether without strength." No, dear sir, I do not suppose you can do so while you speak according to carnal reason. Does the good man say that God has not sent him to bid the dead arise? Then let him not do it. Pray let him not try to do what God never sent him to do. Let him go home and go to bed; he will probably do as much good asleep as awake. But as for me, I am sent to preach in Jesus' name, "Believe and live," and therefore I am not slow to do so. I am sent on purpose to say, Ye dry bones, live, and I dare do no otherwise. No faithful minister who knows what faith means looks to the sinner for power to believe, or looks to himself for power; but he looks to the Master that sent him for power; and in the name of Christ he says to the withered hand, "Be stretched out," and he says to the dead, "Come forth!" and he does not speak in vain. Oh, yes, it is in Christ's name that we fulfill our office! We are miracle-workers: he endows us with *his* power if in faith we tell out his gospel. All of you who try to speak the gospel may do it without fear of failure; for the power lies in the gospel and in the Spirit who goes with it, not in the preacher or in the sinner. Blessed be the name of God, we have this treasure in earthen vessels but the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. So he tells us, then, what to preach, and where to preach it, and how to preach it.

IV. Now, I shall ask your attention to the principal topic of the present discourse, and that is, that he told his disciples WHERE TO BEGIN.

I have heard of a Puritan who had in his sermon forty-five main divisions, and about ten subdivisions under every head. He might be said largely to divide the word of truth, even if he did not rightly divide it. Now, I have nine subheads to-night, and yet I hope I shall not detain you beyond the usual time. I cannot make fewer of them and give the full meaning of this sentence — “Beginning at Jerusalem.” The apostles were not to pick and choose where they should start, but they were to begin at Jerusalem. Why?

First, because *it was written in the Scriptures that they were to begin at Jerusalem*: “Thus it is written, and thus it behooves, that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” It was so written: I will give you two or three proofs. Read in the second chapter of Isaiah, at the third verse: “Out of Zion shall come forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Isaiah’s word would have fallen to the ground if the preaching had not begun at Jerusalem; but now, to the very letter, this prediction of the evangelical prophet is kept. In Joel, that famous Joel who prophesied the descent of the Spirit and the speaking of the servants and the handmaidens, we read in the second chapter, at the thirty-second verse, “In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance;” and again in the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of the same prophet — “The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem.” As if the Lord were as a strong lion in the midst of Jerusalem, and as if the sounding forth of the gospel was like the roaring of his voice, that the nations might hear and tremble. How could those promises have been kept if the gospel had begun to be preached in the deserts of Arabia, or if the first church of Christ had been set up at Damascus? Note another passage. Obadiah in his twenty-first verse says, “Saviours shall come up on mount Zion.” Who were these saviours but those who instrumentally became so by proclaiming the Saviour Jesus Christ. And Zechariah, who is full of visions, but not visionary, says in his fourteenth chapter at the eighth verse, “Living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem,” and then he describes the course of those waters till they flowed even unto the Dead Sea, and made its waters sweet. Because the Bible said so, therefore they must begin at Jerusalem,

and I call your attention to this, for our Lord Jesus was particular that every jot and tittle of the Old Testament should be fulfilled. Do you not think that this reads us a lesson that we should be very reverent towards every sentence of both the Old and the New Testaments; and if there be anything taught by our Lord ought not his people to consider well, and act according to the divine ordinance? I am afraid that many take their religion from their parents, or from the church that is nearest to them, without weighing it. “I counsel thee to keep the King’s commandment.” Oh, that we may be more faithful servants of the Lord; for if we are faithful we shall be careful upon what men call small points, such as the doctrine of baptism, the manner of the Lord’s Supper, or this small point of where the gospel should be first preached. It must begin at Jerusalem and nowhere else; for the Scripture cannot be broken. See ye to it, then, that ye walk according to the word of God, and that ye test everything by it. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” So much on that first head.

Secondly, I suppose that our Lord bade his disciples begin to preach the gospel at Jerusalem, because *it was at Jerusalem that the facts which make up the gospel had occurred*. It was there that Jesus Christ died, that he was buried, that he rose again, and that he ascended into heaven. All these things happened at Jerusalem, or not far from it. Therefore the witness-bearing of the apostles must be upon the spot where if they lie they can be confuted, and where persons can come forward and say, “It was not so; you are deceivers.” If our Lord had said, “Do not say anything in Jerusalem. Go away to Rome and begin preaching there,” it would not have looked quite so straightforward as it now does when he says, “Preach this before the scribes and the priests. They know that it is so. They have bribed the soldiers to say otherwise, but they know that I have risen.” The disciples were to preach the gospel in the streets of Jerusalem. There were people in that city who were once lame, and who leaped like a hart when Jesus healed them. There were men and women there who ate of the fish and that bread that Jesus multiplied. There were people in Jerusalem who had seen their children and their friends healed of dreadful diseases. Jesus bids his disciples beard the lion in his den, and declare the gospel on the spot where, if it had been untrue, it would have been contradicted with violence. Our Lord seemed to say, “Point to the very place where my death took place. Tell them that they crucified me; and see if they dare

deny it. Bring it home to their consciences that they rejected the Christ of God." Hence it was that, coming to the very people who had seen these things, the preaching of Peter had unusual force about it: in addition to the power of the Holy Spirit there was also this — that he was telling them of a crime which they had newly committed, and could not deny: and when they saw their error they turned to God with penitent hearts. I like this thought — that they were to begin at Jerusalem, because there the events of the gospel occurred. This is a direction for you, dear friend: if you have been newly converted, do not be ashamed to tell those who know you. A religion which will not stand the test of the fireside is not worth much! "Oh," says one. "I have never told my husband. I get out on a Thursday night, but he does not know where I am going, and I steal in here. I have never even told my children that I am a believer. I do not like to let it be known. I am afraid that all my family would oppose me." Oh, yes; you are going to heaven, round by the back lanes. Going to sneak into glory as a rat crawls into a room through a hole in the floor! Do not attempt it. Never be ashamed of Christ. Come straight out and say to your friends, "You know what I was; but now I have become a disciple of Jesus Christ." Begin at Jerusalem: it was your Lord's command. He had nothing to be ashamed of. There was no falsehood in what he bade his disciples preach, and therefore he did as good as say, "Hang up my gospel to the light. It is nothing but truth, therefore display it before mine enemies' eyes." If yours is a true, genuine, thorough conversion, I do not say that you are to go up and down the street crying out that you are converted; but on due occasions you must not hide your convictions. Conceal not what the Lord has done for you, but hold up your candle in your own house.

The third reason why the Lord Jesus told them to begin at Jerusalem may have been that *he knew that there would come a time when some of his disciples would despise the Jews*, and therefore he said — When you preach my gospel, begin with them. This is a standing commandment, and everywhere we ought to preach the gospel to the Jew as well as to the Gentile; Paul even says, "to the Jew first." Some seem to think that there ought to be no mission to the Jews — that there is no hope of converting them, that they are of no use when they are converted, and so on. I have even heard some who call themselves Christians speak slightly of the Jewish people. What! and your Lord and Master a Jew! There is no race on earth so exalted as they are. They are the seed of Abraham, God's

friend. We have nobles and dukes in England, but how far could they trace their pedigree? Why, up to a nobody. But the poorest Jew on earth is descended linearly from Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham. Instead of treating them with anything like disrespect, the Saviour says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Just as we say, "Ladies first," so it is "the Jew first." They take precedence among races, and are to be first waited on at the gospel feast. Jesus would have us entertain a deep regard to that nation which God chose of old, and out of which Christ also came, for he is of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. He puts those first who knew him first. Let us never sneer at a Jew again; for our Lord teaches us the rule of his house when he says, "Begin at Jerusalem." Let the seed of Israel first have the gospel presented to them, and if they reject it we shall be clear of their blood. But we shall not be faithful to our orders unless we have taken note of Jews as well as Gentiles.

The fourth reason for beginning at Jerusalem is a practical lesson for you. *Begin where you are tempted not to begin.* Naturally these disciples would have said one to another when they met, "We cannot do much here in Jerusalem. The first night that we met together the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. It is of no use for us to go out into the street; these people are all in such an excited frame of mind that they will not receive us; we had better go up to Damascus, or take a long journey and then commence preaching; and when this excitement is cooled down, and they have forgotten about the crucifixion, we will come and introduce Christ gradually, and say as little as we can about putting him to death." That would have been the rule of policy — that rule which often governs men who ought to be led by faith. But our Lord had said, "Beginning at Jerusalem," and so Peter must stand up in the midst of that motley throng, and he must tell them, "This Jesus whom ye have with wicked hands crucified and slain is now risen from the dead." Instead of tearing Peter to pieces they come crowding up, crying, "We believe in Jesus: let us be baptized into his sacred name." The same day there were added to the church three thousand souls, and a day or two afterwards five thousand were converted by the same kind of preaching. We ought always to try to do good where we think that it will not succeed. If we have a very strong aversion as a token that we are not called to it, we may regard it as a sign that we ought at least to try it. The devil knows you, dear friend, better than you know yourself. You see, he has been longer in the world than you

have, and he knows a great deal more about human nature than you do; and so he comes to you, and he reckons you up pretty accurately, and says, "This brother would be very useful in a certain sphere of labour, and I must keep him from it." So he tells the brother that he is not called to it, and that it is not the sort of thing for him, and so on; and then he says to himself, "I have turned aside one foe from harming my cause." Yonder is a good sister. Oh, how much she might do for Christ, but Satan guides her into a work in which she will never shine; while the holy work which she could do right well is dreaded by her. I heard a beautiful story last Wednesday, when I was sitting to see inquirers, and I cannot help mentioning it here, for it may be a suggestion to some Christian who is present. A brother, who will be received into the church, was converted in the following way. He came up to London, and worked in a certain parish in the West-end. He was at work on a sewer, and a lady from one of the best houses in the West-end came to the men that were making the sewer and said, "You men, come into my servants' hall and eat your dinners. I will give you either tea or coffee with your meal, and then you will not have to go into the public-house." Some of them went in, but others did not. So the next day the lady came out, and said, "Now, I know that you think my place too fine for you. You do not like to come; so I have come out to fetch you in. While this sewer is being done I should like you to eat your dinners in my house." She got them all in; and when they had done their dinners and drank their tea or coffee she began to talk to them about Jesus Christ. The work was a month or so about, and it was every day the same. Our friend does not know the lady's name, but he knows the name of Jesus through her teaching. Friends, we lose hosts of opportunities; I am sure we do. Many ways of doing good have never occurred to our minds, but they ought to occur to us; and when they do occur we should use them. Let us crucify the flesh about this. Let us overcome natural timidity. Let us in some way or other begin at Jerusalem, which is just where we thought that we never could begin.

Now fifthly. We are getting on, you see. "Beginning at Jerusalem," must surely mean *begin at home*. Jerusalem was the capital city of their own country. You know the old proverb, "The cobbler's wife goes barefoot." I am afraid that this proverb is verified by some Christians. They do a deal of good five miles off home, but none at home. I knew a man who used to go out with preachers every night in the week, and try to preach himself,

poor soul that he was; but his children were so neglected that they were the most wicked children in the street, and they grew up in all manner of vice. The father was prancing about and looking after other people, and did not care for his own family. Now, if you are going to serve Christ to the very ends of the earth, take care that you begin at home. Dear parents, need I urge you to look to your own children? It is a great joy to me to know that the members of the church for the most part do this. When a dear sister came to me on Wednesday night with three of her children, making four that had come within the last six weeks, I felt grateful to God that parents were looking after their offspring. But if any of you are in the Sabbath-school, and never have a Sabbath-school at home; if any of you talk to strangers in the aisles, but are neglecting your own sons and daughters — oh, let it not be so! The power of a father's prayers with his arms about his boy's neck I know full well. The power of a mother's prayers with her children all kneeling round her is far greater with the young than any public ministry will be. Look well to your children: begin at Jerusalem.

Begin with your servants. Do not let a servant live in your house in ignorance of the gospel. Do not have family prayer merely as a matter of form, but let it be a reality. Do not have one person working for you to whom you have never spoken about his or her soul.

Begin with your brothers. Oh, the influence of sisters over brothers! I have a friend — a dear friend, too — who has long been a man of God, but in his young days he was a very loose fellow, and often he was all the night away from home. His sister used to write letters to him, and frequently while half tipsy he has read them under the street lamp. One letter which he read cut him to the quick. His sister's grief about him was too much for him, and he was compelled to seek and find the Saviour. Well has the sister been rewarded for all her love to him. Oh, dear friends, begin at Jerusalem! Begin with your brothers and sisters.

Begin with your neighbours. Oh, this London of ours! It is a horrible place for Christian people to live in! Round about this neighbourhood scarcely can a decent person remain by reason of the vice that abounds, and the language that is heard on every side. Many of you are as much vexed to-day as Lot was when he was in Sodom. Well, bear your witness. Do not be dumb dogs, but speak up for your Lord and Master whenever you are.

Look at our dear brother Lazenby, who entered a workshop where none feared the Lord, and has been the means of bringing all in the shop to God. Another shop has felt his influence, and the first recruit has come to join the church: I should not wonder if the whole of the workmen in the second shop should come, too. The Lord grant it. It is marvelous how the gospel spreads when men are in earnest, and their lives are right. God make you so to live that you show piety at home.

Then, sixthly, *begin where much has been already done*. Begin at Jerusalem. It is hard work, dear friends, to preach to certain people: they have been preached to so long, like the people at Jerusalem. They know all about the gospel, it is hard to tell them anything fresh, and yet they have felt nothing, but remain wedded to their sins. The Jerusalem people had been taught for centuries in vain; and yet Christ's disciples were to speak to them first. We must not pass the gospel-hardened; we must labour for the conversion of those who have enjoyed privileges but have neglected them, those who have had impressions and have crushed them out, those who seem now as if they had sealed their own death-warrants and would never be saved. Do not hesitate to go to them. The Lord has done much already: it may be that he has laid the fire, and you are to strike the match and set it all alight. Many people have a love to the gospel, a love to the house of God, a love to God's people, and yet they have no saving faith. What a pity! Do not hesitate to address them. I think I hear you say, "I would rather go and preach to the outcasts." So would I; but you and I are not allowed to pick our work. Virgin soil yields the best harvest; and if a man might choose a congregation that is likely to be fruitful, he might well select those that have never heard the word before. But we have not our choice. The Saviour's disciples were to begin where the prophets had prophesied, and had been put to death; where sinners had rejected God's voice times out of mind. Therefore do not pass by your fellow-seatholders. Perhaps you say, "Sir, I have spoken to them a great many times, but I cannot make anything of them." No, *you* cannot; but God can. Try again. Suppose that for twenty years you were to sit in this Tabernacle side by side with an unconverted person, and you were to speak to that person twice every Sunday and twice in the week, and all the twenty years it should be in vain; yet if the individual was brought to Christ at last would not his conversion repay you? Is your time so very precious? Is your ability so very great? Oh, my dear friend, if you were an

archangel it would be worth while for you to work a thousand years to bring one soul to Christ! A soul is such a precious jewel that you would be abundantly rewarded if a century of service only brought you one conversion. Wherefore, in working for Christ, do not hesitate to go to those who have refused the gospel hitherto, for you may yet prevail.

Seventhly, *begin where the gospel day is short*. If you ask me where I get that thought, it is from the fact that within a very short time Jerusalem was to be destroyed. The Romans were to come there to slay men, women, and children, and break down the walls and leave not one stone upon another. And Christ's disciples knew this; wherefore their Lord said, "Begin at Jerusalem." Now, then, if you have any choice as to the person you shall speak to, select an old man. He is near his journey's end, and if he is unsaved there is but a little bit of candle left by the light of which he may come to Christ. Choose the old man, and do not let him remain ignorant of the gospel. Fish him up at once, for with him it is now or never, since he is on the borders of the grave. Or when any of you notice a girl upon whose cheek you see that hectic flush which marks consumption — if you notice during service the deep "churchyard" cough — say to yourself, "I will not let you go without speaking to you, for you may soon be dead." How many a time have I seen a consumptive at Mentone apparently getting better; but I have noticed him rise from dinner with his handkerchief to his mouth and soon they have whispered, "He died of hemorrhage" — suddenly taken off. When you meet with a pining case, do not wait to be introduced, but introduce yourself; and tenderly, gently, quietly, lovingly say a word about coming to Christ at once. We ought speedily to look up those whose day of grace is short. Perhaps, also, there is a stranger near you who is going far away to a distant land, and may never hear the gospel again; therefore, if you have an opportunity, take care that you avail yourself of it, and reason with him for Jesus at once. Begin at Jerusalem: begin where the day of grace is short.

Eighthly, begin, dear friend, *where you may expect opposition*. That is a singular thing to advise, but I recommend it because the Saviour advised it. It was as certain as that twice two are four that if they preached Christ in Jerusalem, there would be a noise, for there were persons living there who hated the very name of Jesus, for they had conspired to put him to death. If they began at Jerusalem they would arouse a ferocious opposition. But

nothing is much better for the gospel than opposition. A man comes into the Tabernacle to-night, and as he goes away he says, "Yes, I was pleased and satisfied." In that man's case I have failed. But another man keeps biting his tongue, for he cannot endure the preaching. He is very angry; something in the doctrine does not suit him, and he cries, "As long as I live I will never come here again." That man is hopeful. He begins to think. The hook has taken hold of him. Give us time, and we will have that fish. It is no ill omen when a man gets angry with the gospel. It is bad enough, but it is infinitely better than that horrible lethargy into which men fall when they do not think. Some are not good enough even to oppose the gospel of Jesus Christ. Be hopeful of the man who will not let you speak to him, he is one that you must approach again; and if, when he does let you speak to him, he seems as if he would spit on you, be grateful for it. He feels your words. You are touching him on a sore place. You will have him yet. When he swears that he does not believe a word of what you say, do not believe a word of what *he* says; for often the man who openly objects secretly believes. Just as boys whistle when they go through a churchyard in order to keep their courage up, so many a blasphemer is profane in order to silence his conscience. When he feels the hook, like the fish, the man will drag away from it. Give him line. Let him go. The hook will hold, and in due time you will have him. Do not despair. Do not think it a horrible thing that he should oppose you; you should rather be grateful for it, and go to God and cry that he will give you that soul for your hire. Begin courageously where you may expect opposition.

And, lastly, to come to the meaning which Mr John Bunyan has put upon the text in his famous book called "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved," I have no doubt that the Saviour bade them begin at Jerusalem, *because the biggest sinners lived there*. There they lived who had crucified him. The loving Jesus bids them preach repentance and remission to them. There he lived who had pierced the Saviour's side, and they that had plaited the crown of thorns, and put it on his head. There dwell those who had mocked him and spat upon him; therefore the loving Jesus, who so freely forgives, says, "Go and preach the gospel first to them." The greatest sinners are the objects of the greatest mercy. Preach first to them. Are there any such here? My dear friend, we must preach the gospel first to you because you want it most. You are dying; your wounds are bleeding; the heavenly surgeon bids us staunch your wounds first. Others who are not so badly

hurt may wait awhile, but you must be first served lest you die of your injuries. Should not this encourage you great sinners to come to Jesus, when he bids us preach to you first?

We are to preach to you first because, when you have received him, you will praise him most. If you are saved you will encourage others to come, and you will cheer up those who have come already. We shall be glad to get fresh blood poured into the veins of the church by the conversion of big sinners who love much because they have had much forgiven.

Therefore, we are to come to you *first*. Will you not come to Christ at once? Oh, that you would believe in him! Oh that you would believe in him to-night! To you is the word of this salvation sent. You old sinners — you that have added sin to sin, and done all you can do with both hands wickedly — you that have cursed his name — you that have robbed others — you that have told lies — you that have blackened yourselves with every crime, come and welcome to Jesus. Come to Christ and live at once. Mercy's door is set wide open on purpose that the vilest of the vile may come; and they are called to come first. Just as you are, come along with you. Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but now "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This night if you believe in Jesus you shall go out of these doors rejoicing that the Lord has put away your sin. To believe is to *trust* — simply to trust in Christ. It seems a very simple thing, but that is why it is so hard. If it were a hard thing you would more readily attend to it; but being so easy you cannot believe that it is effectual. But it is so; faith does save. Christ wants nothing of you but that you accept what he freely presents to you. Put out an empty hand, a black hand, a trembling hand; accept what Jesus gives, and salvation is yours.

Thus have I tried to expound "Beginning at Jerusalem," O that my Lord would begin with *you*. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —
MATTHEW 28.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 486, 537.

THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE DO NOT LEAD TO SIN

A Sermon

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“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”

— Romans 6:14, 15

Last Sabbath morning I tried to show that the substance and essence of the true gospel is the doctrine of God's grace — that, in fact, if you take away the grace of God from the gospel you have extracted from it its very life-blood, and there is nothing left worth preaching, worth believing, or worth contending for. Grace is the soul of the gospel: without it the gospel is dead. Grace is the music of the gospel: without it the gospel is silent as to all comfort. I endeavoured also to set forth the doctrine of grace in brief terms, teaching that God deals with sinful men upon the footing of pure mercy: finding them guilty and condemned, he gives free pardons, altogether irrespective of past character, or of any good works which may be foreseen. Moved only by pity he devises a plan for their rescue from sin and its consequences — a plan in which grace is the leading feature. Out of free favour he has provided, in the death of his dear Son, an atonement by means of which his mercy can be justly bestowed. He accepts all those who place their trust in this atonement, selecting faith as the way of salvation, that it may be all of grace. In this he acts, from a motive found within himself, and not because of any reason found in the sinner's conduct, past, present, or future. I tried to show that this grace of God flows towards the sinner from of old, and begins its operations upon him when there is nothing good in him: it works in him that which is good and acceptable, and continues so to work in him till the deed of grace is

complete, and the believer is received up into the glory for which he is made meet. Grace commences to save, and it perseveres till all is done. From first to last, from the “A” to the “Z” of the heavenly alphabet, everything in salvation is of grace, and grace alone; all is of free favour, nothing of merit. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,” “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

No sooner is this doctrine set forth in a clear light than men begin to cavil at it. It is the target for all carnal logic to shoot at. Unrenewed minds never did like it, and they never will; it is so humbling to human pride, making so light of the nobility of human nature. That men are to be saved by divine charity, that they must as condemned criminals receive pardon by the exercise of the royal prerogative, or else perish in their sins, is a teaching which they cannot endure. God alone is exalted in the sovereignty of his mercy; and the sinner can do no better than meekly touch the silver scepter, and accept undeserved favour just because God wills to give it: — this is not pleasant to the great minds of our philosophers, and the broad phylacteries of our moralists, and therefore they turn aside, and fight against the empire of grace. Straightway the unrenewed man seeks out artillery with which to fight against the gospel of the grace of God, and one of the biggest guns he has ever brought to the front is the declaration that the doctrine of the grace of God must lead to licentiousness. If great sinners are freely saved, then men will more readily become great sinners; and if when God’s grace regenerates a man it abides with him, then men will infer that they may live as they like, and yet be saved. This is the constantly-repeated objection which I have heard till it wearies me with its vain and false noise. I am almost ashamed to have to refute so rotten an argument. They dare to assert that men will take license to be guilty because God is gracious, and they do not hesitate to say that if men are not to be saved by their works they will come to the conclusion that their conduct is a matter of indifference, and that they may as well sin that grace may abound.

This morning I want to talk a little about this notion; for in part it is a great mistake, and in part it is a great lie. In part it is a mistake because it arises from misconception, and in part it is a lie because men know better, or might know better if they pleased.

I begin by admitting that the charge does appear somewhat probable. It does seem very likely that if we are to go up and down the country, and say, "The very chief of sinners may be forgiven through believing in Jesus Christ, for God is displaying mercy to the very vilest of the vile," then sin will seem to be a cheap thing. If we are everywhere to cry, "Come, ye sinners, come and welcome, and receive free and immediate pardon through the sovereign grace of God," it does seem probable that some may basely reply, "Let us sin without stint, for we can easily obtain forgiveness." But that which looks to be probable is not, therefore, certain: on the contrary, the improbable and the unexpected full often come to pass. In questions of moral influence nothing is more deceptive than theory. The ways of the human mind are not to be laid down with a pencil and compasses; man is a singular being. Even that which is logical is not always inevitable, for men's minds are not governed by the rules of the schools. I believe that the inference which would lead men to sin because grace reigns is not logical, but the very reverse; and I venture to assert that, as a matter of fact, ungodly men do not, as a rule plead the grace of God as an excuse for their sin. As a rule they are too indifferent to care about reasons at all; and if they do offer an excuse it is usually more flimsy and superficial. There may be a few men of perverse minds who have used this argument, but there is no accounting for the freaks of the fallen understanding. I shrewdly suspect that in any cases in which such reasoning has been put forward it was a mere pretence, and by no means a plea which satisfied the sinner's own conscience. If men do thus excuse themselves, it is generally in some veiled manner, for the most of them would be utterly ashamed to state the argument in plain terms. I question whether the devil himself would be found reasoning thus — "God is merciful, therefore let us be more sinful." It is so diabolical an inference, that I do not like to charge my fellow-men with it, though our moralist opposers do not hesitate thus to degrade them. Surely, no intelligent being can really persuade itself that the goodness of God is a reason for offending him more than ever. Moral insanity produces strange reasonings, but it is my solemn conviction that very rarely do men practically consider the grace of God to be a motive for sin. That which seems so probable at the first blush, is not so when we come to consider it.

I have admitted that a few human beings have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness; but I trust no one will ever argue against any doctrine on account of the perverse use made of it by the baser sort. Cannot every

truth be perverted? Is there a single doctrine of Scripture which graceless hands have not twisted into mischief? Is there not an almost infinite ingenuity in wicked men for making evil out of good? If we are to condemn a truth because of the misbehaviour of individuals who profess to believe it, we should be found condemning our Lord himself for what Judas did, and our holy faith would die at the hands of apostates and hypocrites. Let us act like rational men. We do not find fault with ropes because poor insane creatures have hanged themselves therewith; nor do we ask that the wares of Sheffield may be destroyed because edged tools are the murderer's instruments.

It may appear probable that the doctrine of free grace will be made into a license for sin, but a better acquaintance with the curious working of the human mind corrects the notion. Fallen as human nature is, it is still human, and therefore does not take kindly to certain forms of evil — such, for instance, as inhuman ingratitude. It is hardly human to multiply injuries upon those who return us continued benefits. The case reminds me of the story of half-a-dozen boys who had severe fathers, accustomed to flog them within an inch of their lives. Another boy was with them who was tenderly beloved by his parents, and known to do so. These young gentlemen met together to hold a council of war about robbing an orchard. They were all of them anxious to get about it except the favoured youth, who did not enjoy the proposal. One of them cried out, “*You* need not be afraid: if our fathers catch us at this work, we shall be half-killed, but your father won't lay a hand upon *you*.” The little boy answered, “And do you think because my father is kind to me, that therefore I will do wrong and grieve him? I will do nothing of the sort to my dear father. He is so good to me that I cannot vex him.” It would appear that the argument of the many boys was not overpoweringly convincing to their companion: the opposite conclusion was quite as logical, and evidently carried weight with it. If God is good to the undeserving, some men will go into sin, but there are others of a nobler order whom the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. They scorn the beast-like argument — that the more loving God is, the more rebellious we may be; and they feel that against a God of goodness it is an evil thing to rebel.

By-the-way I cannot help observing that I have known persons object to the evil influence of the doctrines of grace who were by no means qualified

by their own morality to be judges of the subject. Morals must be in a poor way when immoral persons become their guardians. The doctrine of justification by faith is frequently objected to as injurious to morals. A newspaper some time ago quoted a verse from one of our popular hymns

“Weary, working, plodding one,
 Why toil you so?
 Cease your doing; all was done
 Long, long ago.
 “Till to Jesus’ work you cling
 By a simple faith,
 ‘Doing’ is a deadly thing,
 ‘Doing’ ends in death.”

This is styled mischievous teaching. When I read the article I felt a deep interest in this corrector of Luther and Paul, and I wondered how much he had drunk in order to elevate his mind to such a pitch of theological knowledge. I have found men pleading against the doctrines of grace on the ground that they did not promote morality, to whom I could have justly replied, “What has morality to do with you, or you with it?” These sticklers for good works are not often the doers of them. Let legalists look to their own hands and tongues, and leave the gospel of grace and its advocates to answer for themselves.

Looking back in history, I see upon its pages a refutation of the oft-repeated calumny. Who dares to suggest that the men who believed in the grace of God have been sinners above other sinners? With all their faults, those who throw stones at them will be few if they first prove themselves to be their superiors in character. When have they been the patrons of vice, or the defenders of injustice? Pitch upon the point in English history when this doctrine was very strong in the land; who were the men that held these doctrines most firmly? Men like Owen, Charnock, Manton, Howe, and I hesitate not to add Oliver Cromwell. What kind of men were these? Did they pander to the licentiousness of a court? Did they invent a Book of Sports for Sabbath diversion? Did they haunt ale-houses and places of revelry? Every historian will tell you, the greatest fault of these men in the eyes of their enemies was that they were too precise for the generation in which they lived, so that they called them

Puritans, and condemned them as holding a gloomy theology. Sirs, if there was iniquity in the land in that day, it was to be found with the theological party which preached up salvation by works. The gentlemen with their womanish locks and essenced hair, whose speech savoured of profanity, were the advocates of salvation by works, and all bedabbled with lust they pleaded for human merit; but the men who believed in grace alone were of another style. They were not in the chambers of rioting and wantonness; where were they? They might be found on their knees crying to God for help in temptation; and in persecuting times they might be found in prison, cheerfully suffering the loss of all things for the truth's sake. The Puritans were the godliest men on the face of the earth. Are men so inconsistent as to nickname them for their purity, and yet say that their doctrines lead to sin?

Nor is this a solitary instance — this instance of Puritanism; all history confirms the rule: and when it is said that these doctrines will create sin, I appeal to facts, and leave the oracle to answer as it may. If we are ever to see a pure and godly England we must have a gospelized England: if we are to put down drunkenness and the social evil it must be by the proclamation of the grace of God. Men must be forgiven by grace, renewed by grace, transformed by grace, sanctified by grace, preserved by grace; and when that comes to pass the golden age will dawn; but while they are merely taught their duty, and left to do it of themselves in their own strength, it is labour in vain. You may flog a dead horse a long while before it will stir: you need to put life into it, for else all your flogging will fail. To teach men to walk who have no feet is poor work, and such is instruction in morals before grace gives a heart to love holiness. The gospel alone supplies men with motive and strength, and therefore it is to the gospel that we must look as the real reformer of men.

I shall fight this morning with the objection before us as I shall find strength. The doctrine of grace, the whole plan of salvation by grace, is most promotive of holiness. Wherever it comes it helps us to say, "God forbid," to the question, "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" This I would set out in the clear sunlight.

I wish to call your attention to some six or seven points.

I. First, you will see that the gospel of the grace of God promotes real holiness in men by remembering that **THE SALVATION WHICH IT BRINGS IS SALVATION FROM THE POWER OF SIN.** When we preach salvation to the vilest of men, some suppose we mean by that a mere deliverance from hell and an entrance into heaven. It includes all that, and results in that, but that is not what we mean. What we mean by salvation is this — deliverance from the love of sin, rescue from the habit of sin, setting free from the desire to sin. Now listen. If it be so, that that boon of deliverance from sin is the gift of divine grace, in what way will that gift, or the free distribution of it, produce sin? I fail to see any such danger. On the contrary, I say to the man who proclaims a gracious promise of victory over sin, “Make all speed: go up and down throughout the world, and tell the vilest of mankind that God is willing by his grace to set them free from the love of sin and to make new creatures of them.” Suppose the salvation we preach be this: — you that have lived ungodly and wicked lives may enjoy your sins, and yet escape the penalty — that would be mischievous indeed; but if it be this, — you that live the most ungodly and wicked lives may yet by believing in the Lord Jesus be enabled to change those lives, so that you shall live unto God instead of serving sin and Satan, — what harm can come to the most prudish morals? Why, I say spread such a gospel, and let it circulate through every part of our vast empire, and let all men hear it, whether they rule in the House of Lords or suffer in the house of bondage. Tell them everywhere that God freely and of infinite grace is willing to renew men, and make them new creatures in Christ Jesus. Can any evil consequences come of the freest proclamation of this news? The worse men are, the more gladly would we see them embracing this truth, for these are they who most need it. I say to every one of you, whoever you may be, whatever your past condition, God can renew you according to the power of his grace; so that you who are to him like dead, dry bones, can be made to live by his Spirit. That renewal will be seen in holy thoughts, and pure words, and righteous acts to the glory of God. In great love he is prepared to work all these things in all who believe. Why should any men be angry at such a statement? What possible harm can come of it? I defy the most cunning adversary to object, upon the ground of morals, to God’s giving men new hearts and right spirits even as he pleases.

II. Secondly, let it not be forgotten as a matter of fact that THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE HAS BEEN FOUND TO POSSESS VERY GREAT POWER OVER MEN. In the infancy of history nations dream that crime can be put down by severity, and they rely upon fierce punishments; but experience corrects the error. Our forefathers dreaded forgery, which is a troublesome fraud, and interferes with the confidence which should exist between man and man. To put it down they made forgery a capital offence. Alas for the murders committed by that law! Yet the constant use of the gallows was never sufficient to stamp out the crime. Many offences have been created and multiplied by the penalty which was meant to suppress them. Some offences have almost ceased when the penalty against them has been lightened.

It is a notable fact as to men, that if they are forbidden to do a thing they straightway pine to do it, though they had never thought of doing it before. Law commands obedience, but does not promote it; it often creates disobedience, and an over-weighted penalty has been known to provoke an offence. Law fails, but love wins.

Love in any case makes sin infamous. If one should rob another it would be sufficiently bad; but suppose a man robbed his friend, who had helped him often when he was in need, everyone would say that his crime was most disgraceful. Love brands sin on the forehead with a red-hot iron. If a man should kill an enemy, the offence would be grievous; but if he slew his father, to whom he owes his life, or his mother, on whose breasts he was nursed in infancy, then all would cry out against the monster. In the light of love sin is seen to be exceeding sinful.

Nor is this all. *Love has a great constraining power towards the highest form of virtue.* Deeds to which a man could not be compelled on the ground of law, men have cheerfully done because of love. Would our brave seamen man the life-boat to obey an Act of Parliament? No, they would indignantly revolt against being forced to risk their lives; but they will do it freely to save their fellow-men. Remember that text of the apostle, "Scarcely for a righteous (or merely just) man will one die: yet peradventure," says he, "for a good (benevolent) man some would even dare to die." Goodness wins the heart, and one is ready to die for the kind and generous. Look how men have thrown away their lives for great leaders. That was an immortal saying of the wounded French soldier.

When searching for the bullet the surgeon cut deeply, and the patient cried out, "A little lower and you will touch the Emperor," meaning that the Emperor's name was written on his heart. In several notable instances men have thrown themselves into the jaws of death to save a leader whom they loved. Duty holds the fort, but love casts its body in the way of the deadly bullet. Who would think of sacrificing his life on the ground of law? Love alone counts not life so dear as the service of the beloved. Love to Jesus creates a heroism of which law knows nothing. All the history of the church of Christ, when it has been true to its Lord, is a proof of this.

Kindness also, working by the law of love, has often changed the most unworthy, and therein proved that it is not a factor of evil. We have often heard the story of the soldier who had been degraded to the ranks, and flogged and imprisoned, and yet for all that he would get drunk and misbehave himself. The commanding officer said one day, "I have tried almost everything with this man, and can do nothing with him. I will try one thing more." When he was brought in, the officer addressed him, and said, "You seem incorrigible: we have tried everything with you; there seems to be no hope of a change in your wicked conduct. I am determined to try if another plan will have any effect. Though you deserve flogging and long imprisonment, I shall freely forgive you." The man was greatly moved by the unexpected and undeserved pardon, and became a good soldier. The story wears truth on its brow: we all see that it would probably end so.

That anecdote is such good argument that I will give you another. A drunkard woke up one morning from his drunken sleep, with his clothes on him just as he had rolled down the night before. He saw his only child, his daughter Millie, getting his breakfast. Coming to his senses he said to her, "Millie, why do you stay with me?" She answered, "Because you are my father, and because I love you." He looked at himself, and saw what a sottish, ragged, good-for-nothing creature he was, and he answered her, "Millie, do you really love me?" The child cried, "Yes, father, I do, and I will never leave you, because when mother died she said, 'Millie, stick to your father, and always pray for him, and one of these days he will give up drink, and be a good father to you'; so I will never leave you." Is it wonderful when I add that, as the story has it, Millie's father cast away his drink, and became a Christian man? It would have been more

remarkable if he had not. Millie was trying free grace, was she not? According to our moralists she should have said, "Father, you are a horrible wretch! I have stuck to you long enough: I must now leave you, or else I shall be encouraging other fathers to get drunk." Under such proper dealing I fear Millie's father would have continued a drunkard till he drank himself into perdition. But the power of love made a better man of him. Do not these instances prove that undeserved love has a great influence for good?

Hear another story: In the old persecuting times there lived in Cheapside one who feared God and attended the secret meetings of the saints; and near him there dwelt a poor cobbler, whose wants were often relieved by the merchant; but the poor man was a cross-grained being, and, most ungratefully, from hope of reward, laid an information against his kind friend on the score of religion. This accusation would have brought the merchant to death by burning if he had not found a means of escape. Returning to his house, the injured man did not change his generous behaviour to the malignant cobbler, but, on the contrary, was more liberal than ever. The cobbler was, however, in an ill mood, and avoided the good man with all his might, running away at his approach. One day he was obliged to meet him face to face, and the Christian man asked him gently, "Why do you shun me? I am not your enemy. I know all that you did to injure me, but I never had an angry thought against you. I have helped you, and I am willing to do so as long as I live, only let us be friends." Do you marvel that they clasped hands? Would you wonder if ere long the poor man was found at the Lollards' meeting? All such anecdotes rest upon the assured fact that grace has a strange subduing power, and leads men to goodness, drawing them with cords of love, and bands of a man. The Lord knows that bad as men are the key of their hearts hangs on the nail of love. He knows that his almighty goodness, though often baffled, will triumph in the end. I believe my point is proved. To myself it is so. However, we must pass on.

III. There is no fear that the doctrine of the grace of God will lead men to sin, because ITS OPERATIONS ARE CONNECTED WITH A SPECIAL REVELATION OF THE EVIL OF SIN. Iniquity is made to be exceeding bitter before it is forgiven or when it is forgiven. When God begins to deal with a man with a view of blotting out his sins and making him his child,

he usually causes him to see his evil ways in all their heinousness; he makes him look on sin with fixed eyes, till he cries with David, “My sin is ever before me.” In my own case, when under conviction of sin, no cheering object met my mental eye, my soul saw only darkness and a horrible tempest. It seemed as though a horrible spot were painted on my eyeballs. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, drew the curtains of my bed, so that I rested not, but in my slumbers anticipated the wrath to come. I felt that I had offended God, and that this was the most awful thing a human being could do. I was out of order with my Creator, out of order with the universe; I had damned myself for ever, and I wondered that I did not immediately feel the gnawing of the undying worm. Even to this hour a sight of sin causes the most dreadful emotions in my heart. Any man or woman here who has passed through that experience, or anything like it, will henceforth feel a deep horror of sin. A burnt child dreads the fire. “No,” says the sinner to his tempter, “you once deceived me, and I so smarted in consequence, that I will not again be deluded. I have been delivered, like a brand from the burning, and I cannot go back to the fire.” By the operations of grace we are made weary of sin; we loathe both it and its imaginary pleasures. We would utterly exterminate it from the soil of our nature. It is a thing accursed, even as Amalek was to Israel. If you, my friend, do not detest every sinful thing, I fear you are still in the gall of bitterness; for one of the sure fruits of the Spirit is a love of holiness, and a loathing of every false way. A deep inward experience forbids the child of God to sin: he has known within himself its judgment and its condemnation, and henceforth it is a thing abhorrent to him. An enmity both fierce and endless exists between the chosen seed and the serpent brood of evil: hence the fear that grace will be abused is abundantly safeguarded.

IV. Remember also that not only is the forgiven man thus set against sin by the process of conviction, but EVERY MAN WHO TASTES OF THE SAVING GRACE OF GOD IS MADE A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST JESUS. Now if the doctrine of grace in the hands of an ordinary man might be dangerous, yet it would cease to be so in the hands of one who is quickened by the Spirit, and created anew in the image of God. The Holy Spirit comes upon the chosen one, and transforms him: his ignorance is removed, his affections are changed, his understanding is enlightened, his will is subdued, his desires are refined, his life is changed — in fact, he is as

one new-born, to whom all things have become new. This change is compared in Scripture to the resurrection from the dead, to a creation, and to a new birth. This takes place in every man who becomes a partaker of the free grace of God. "Ye must be born again," said Christ to Nicodemus; and gracious men are born again. One said the other day, "If I believed that I was eternally saved, I should live in sin." Perhaps *you* would; but if you were renewed in heart you would not. "But," says one, "if I believed God loved me from before the foundation of the world, and that therefore I should be saved, I would take a full swing of sin." Perhaps *you* and the devil would; but God's regenerate children are not of so base a nature. To them the abounding grace of the Father is a bond to righteousness which they never think of breaking: they feel the sweet constraints of sacred gratitude, and desire to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. All beings live according to their nature, and the regenerated man works out the holy instincts of his renewed mind: crying after holiness, warring against sin, labouring to be pure in all things, the regenerate man puts forth all his strength towards that which is pure and perfect. A new heart makes all the difference. Given a new nature, and then all the propensities run in a different way, and the blessings of almighty love no longer involve peril, but suggest the loftiest aspirations.

V. One of the chief securities for the holiness of the pardoned is found in the way of CLEANSING THROUGH ATONEMENT. The blood of Jesus sanctifies as well as pardons. The sinner learns that his free pardon cost the life of his best Friend; that in order to his salvation the Son of God himself agonized even to a bloody sweat, and died forsaken of his God. This causes a sacred mourning for sin, as he looks upon the Lord whom he pierced. Love to Jesus burns within the pardoned sinner's breast, for the Lord is his Redeemer; and therefore he feels a burning indignation against the murderous evil of sin. To him all manner of evil is detestable, since it is stained with the Saviour's heart's blood. As the penitent sinner hears the cry of, "Eloi, sabachthani!" he is horrified to think that one so pure and good should be forsaken of heaven because of the sin which he bore in his people's stead. From the death of Jesus the mind draws the conclusion that sin is exceedingly sinful in the sight of the Lord; for if eternal justice would not spare even the Well-beloved Jesus when imputed sin was upon him, how much less will it spare guilty men? It must be a thing unutterably full of poison which could make even the immaculate Jesus suffer so

terribly. Nothing can be imagined which can have greater power over gracious minds than the vision of a crucified Saviour denouncing sin by all his wounds, and by every falling drop of blood. What! live in the sin which slew Jesus? Find pleasure in that which wrought his death? Trifle with that which laid his glory in the dust? Impossible! Thus you see that the gifts of free grace, when handed down by a pierced hand, are never likely to suggest self-indulgence in sin, but the very reverse.

VI. Sixthly, a man who becomes a partaker of divine grace, and receives the new nature, is ever afterwards A PARTAKER OF DAILY HELPS FROM GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. God the Holy Ghost deigns to dwell in the bosom, of every man whom God has saved by his grace. Is not that a wonderful means of sanctifying? By what process can men be better kept from sin than by having the Holy Spirit himself to dwell as Vice-regent within their hearts? The Ever-blessed Spirit leads believers to be much in prayer, and what a power for holiness is found in the child of grace speaking to the heavenly Father! The tempted man flies to his chamber, unbosoms his grief to God, looks to the flowing wounds of his Redeemer, and comes down strong to resist temptation. The divine word also, with its precepts and promises, is a never-failing source of sanctification. Were it not that we every day bathe in the sacred fountain of eternal strength we might soon be weak and irresolute; but fellowship with God renews us in our vigorous warfare with sin. How is it possible that the doctrines of grace should suggest sin to men who constantly draw near to God? The renewed man is also by God's Spirit frequently quickened in conscience; so that things which heretofore did not strike him as sinful are seen in a clearer light, and are consequently condemned. I know that certain matters are sinful to me today which did not appear so ten years ago: my judgment has, I trust, been more and more cleared of the blindness of sin. The natural conscience is callous and hard; but the gracious conscience grows more and more tender till at last it becomes as sensitive as a raw wound. He who has most grace is most conscious of his need of more grace. The gracious are often afraid to put one foot before another for fear of doing wrong. Have you not felt this holy fear, this sacred caution? It is by this means that the Holy Spirit prevents your ever turning your Christian liberty into licentiousness, or daring to make the grace of God an argument for folly.

Then, in addition to this, the good Spirit leads us into high and hallowed intercourse with God, and I defy a man to live upon the mount with God, and then come down to transgress like men of the world. If thou hast walked the palace floor of glory, and seen the King in his beauty, till the light of his countenance has been thy heaven, thou canst not be content with the gloom and murkiness of the tents of wickedness. To lie, to deceive, to feign, as the men of the world do, will no longer besee thee. Thou art of another race, and thy conversation is above them: "Thy speech betrayeth thee." If thou dost indeed dwell with God, the perfume of the ivory palaces will be about thee, and men will know that thou hast been in other haunts than theirs. If the child of God goes wrong in any degree, he loses to some extent the sweetness of his communion, and only as he walks carefully with God does he enjoy full fellowship; so that this rising or falling in communion becomes a sort of parental discipline in the house of the Lord. We have no court with a judge, but we have home with its fatherhood, its smile and its rod. We lack not for order in the family of love, for our Father dealeth with us as with sons. Thus, in a thousand ways, all danger of our presuming upon the grace of God is effectually removed.

VII. THE ENTIRE ELEVATION OF THE MAN WHO IS MADE A PARTAKER OF THE GRACE OF GOD is also a special preservative against sin. I venture to say, though it may be controverted, that the man who believes the glorious doctrines of grace is usually a much higher style of man than the person who has no opinion upon the matter. What do most men think about? Bread-and-butter, house-rent and clothes. But the men who consider the doctrines of the gospel muse upon the everlasting covenant, predestination, immutable love, effectual calling, God in Christ Jesus, the work of the Spirit, justification, sanctification, adoption, and such like noble themes. Why, it is a refreshment merely to look over the catalogue of these grand truths! Others are as children playing with little sand-heaps on the seashore; but the believer in free grace walks among hills and mountains. The themes of thought around him tower upward, Alps on Alps; the man's mental stature rises with his surroundings, and he becomes a thoughtful being, communing with sublimities. No small matter this, for a thing so apt to grovel as the average human intellect. So far as deliverance from mean vices and degrading lusts must in this way be promoted, I say, it is no small thing. Thoughtlessness is the prolific

mother of iniquity. It is a hopeful sign when minds begin to roam among lofty truths. The man who has been taught of God to think will not so readily sin as the being whose mind is buried beneath his flesh. The man has now obtained a different view of himself from that which led him to trifle away his time with the idea that there was nothing better for him than to be merry while he could. He says, "I am one of God's chosen, ordained to be his son, his heir, joint-heir with Jesus Christ. I am set apart to be a king and priest unto God, and as such I cannot be godless, nor live for the common objects of life." He rises in the object of his pursuit: he cannot henceforth live unto himself, for he is not his own, he is bought with a price. Now he dwells in the presence of God, and life to him is real, earnest, and sublime. He cares not to scrape together gold with the muck-rake of the covetous, for he is immortal, and must needs seek eternal gains. He feels that he is born for divine purposes, and enquires "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" He feels that God has loved him that his love may flow forth to others. God's choice of any one man has a bearing upon all the rest: he elects a Joseph that a whole family, a whole nation, nay, the whole world, may be preserved alive when famine had broken the staff of bread. We are each one as a lamp kindled that we may shine in the dark, and light up other lamps.

New hopes come crowding on the man who is saved by grace. His immortal spirit enjoys glimpses of the endless. As God has loved him in time, he believes that the like love will bless him in eternity. He knows that his Redeemer lives, and that in the latter days he shall behold him; and therefore he has no fears for the future. Even while here below he begins to sing the songs of the angels, for his spirit spies from afar the dawn of the glory which is yet to be revealed. Thus with joyous heart and light footstep he goes forward to the unknown future as merrily as to a wedding-feast.

Is there a sinner here, a guilty sinner, one who has no merit, no claim to mercy whatever; is there one willing to be saved by God's free grace through believing in Jesus Christ? Then let me tell thee, sinner, there is not a word in God's book against thee, not a line or syllable, but everything is in thy favour. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief. Jesus came into the world to save thee. Only do thou trust him, and rest in him. I

will tell thee what ought to fetch thee to Christ at once, it is the thought of his amazing love. A profligate son had been a great grief to his father; he had robbed him and disgraced him, and at last he ended by bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. He was a horrible wretch of a son: no one could have been more graceless. However, he attended his father's funeral, and he stayed to hear the will read: perhaps it was the chief reason why he was there. He had fully made up his mind that his father would cut him off with a shilling, and he meant to make it very unpleasant for the rest of the family. To his great astonishment, as the will was read it ran something like this: "As for my son Richard, though he has fearfully wasted my substance, and though he has often grieved my heart, I would have him know that I consider him still to be my own dear child, and therefore, in token of my undying love, I leave him the same share as the rest of his brothers." He left the room; he could not stand it, the surprising love of his father had mastered him. He came down to the executor the next morning, and said, "You surely did not read correctly?" "Yes I did; there it stands." "Then," he said, "I feel ready to curse myself that I ever grieved my dear old father. Oh, that I could fetch him back again!" Love was born in that base heart by an unexpected display of love. May not your case be similar? Our Lord Jesus Christ is dead, but he has left it in his will that the chief of sinners are objects of his choicest mercy. Dying he prayed, "Father, forgive them." Risen he pleads for transgressors. Sinners are ever on his mind: their salvation is his great object. His blood is for them, his heart for them, his righteousness for them, his heaven for them. Come, O ye guilty ones, and receive your legacy. Put out the hand of faith and grasp your portion. Trust Jesus with your souls, and he will save you. God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Romans 6.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 136, 980 645.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

FOUND BY JESUS, AND FINDING JESUS

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's Day, August 26th, 1894,

Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 24th, 1888.

“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

— John 1:43-45

For a soul to come to Jesus, is the grandest event in its history. It is spiritually dead till that day; but it then begins to live, and a saved man may reckon his age from the time in which he first knew the Lord. That day of first knowing Christ is important in the highest degree, because it affects all the man's past career; it sheds another light on all the years that have gone by. If he has lived in sin, as no doubt he has, the transaction of that day blots out all the sin. The day in which a man comes to Christ, that very day his transgressions and iniquities are blotted out, even as the thick clouds are driven from the sky when God's strong wind chases them away. Is not that a grand day in which our sins are cast into the depths of

the sea so that henceforth it can be said of them, "They may be sought for, but they shall not be found; yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord"? I say that the day in which a soul comes into contact with Christ is the greatest day of its history, because all the past is changed by it; and as for the present, what a different life does a man begin to live on the day in which he finds the Lord! He commences to live in the light instead of being dead in the darkness; he begins to enjoy the privileges of liberty, instead of suffering the horrors of slavery; he is started on the way to heaven, instead of continuing on the road to hell. He is such a new creature that he cannot tell how changed he is. One said to me, "Sir, the change in me is of this kind; either the whole world is altered, or else I am." So is it when we are brought to know Christ; it is a real, total, radical change. With many, it is a most joyous alteration; they feel like the man who had been lame, and who, when Peter spoke to him in the name of Jesus, and lifted him up, so that his feet and ankle bones received strength, was not satisfied with walking, for we read, "He leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." He was walking, and leaping, and praising God; do you wonder at it? If you had lost the use of your legs for a while, you would feel like leaping and praising God when you had them all right again; and thus is it with a soul when it first finds the Saviour. Oh! happy, happy day, when the miraculous hand of Christ takes away the infirmities of the soul, and makes the lame man to leap as a hart, and causes the tongue of the dumb to sing!

The day in which a man comes to Christ is also a wonderful day in its effect upon all his future. It is as when the helm of a ship is put right about; the man now sails in a totally different direction. His future will never be what his past was. There may be faults; there may be infirmities and shortcomings; but there will never be the old love of sin any more. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." This is God's own promise to us, given through his servant Paul. When Christ comes to our soul, he so breaks the neck of sin, that though it lives a struggling, dying life, and often makes a deal of howling in the heart, yet it is doomed to die. The cross of Christ has broken its back, and broken its neck, too, and die it must. Henceforth the man is bound for holiness, and bound for heaven.

Now, dear friends, have any of you come to Christ? I know that you have, the great mass of you, and I bless God, and so do you, that it is so with you; but if there are any of you who have never come to the Saviour, I wish that this might be the night when you should find him. I am but a poor lame preacher; you are not often troubled with the sight of one sitting down and preaching; yet I think that if I had lost my legs, and had always to lie on my back, I would like even then to preach Christ crucified, and to

“Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found.”

I do pray that some of you to-night, made to think all the more by the infirmity of the preacher, may be led to seek and to find the Saviour, and then it shall be a happy day indeed for you, as it has been for so many more.

I am going to talk to you about Philip's conversion, and first, I ask you to notice, in our text, the convert's description of it: “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” That is Philip's description of it: “We have found Jesus.” It was a true description, but it was not all the truth; so, in the second place, we will notice the Holy Spirit's description of it: “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip.” Philip's account of the incident is that he found Christ; but the Holy Spirit's record of it is that Christ found Philip. They are both true, however; although the latter is the fuller. We will talk a little about both descriptions of Philip's conversion.

I. First then, THE CONVERT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS COMING TO CHRIST is given in these words, “We have found...Jesus,” and what he says is perfectly true.

If any one of you is saved, it will be by finding Christ, by your personally making a discovery of him, as that man did who found the treasure that was hid in the field. There must be a search after Christ; but if there be a search after him, we may be certain of this one thing, that there will first be a consciousness of needing him.

Philip had sought Christ, or else he would never have said that he had found him; but, before that, Philip knew that there was need of a Messiah. When he looked round about on the world, and on the church, he said to himself, "Oh, that the promised Messiah would come! There is great need of him. The people need him, the church needs him, the world needs him." When Philip looked into his own heart, he said, "Oh, for the coming of the Messiah! I feel that I want him; I have urgent need of him." Dear hearer, do you feel that you need a Saviour? You never will seek him until you do feel your need of him. You must recognize that there is sin in you, sin for which you cannot make atonement, sin that you cannot overcome. You must realize that you need another and a stronger arm than your own, that you need divine help, that you need One who can be your Brother, to sympathize with you, and be patient with you, and yet who can be the Mighty God to conquer all your sin for you. You do need a Saviour; that is the first thing that will prompt you to search for him.

Wanting a Messiah, Philip read the Scriptures concerning him. He speaks about Moses and the prophets, and of what they had written concerning the promised Deliverer. O my dear hearers, if you want to find Christ, you must search the Scriptures, for they testify of him! Oh, that you did search the Scriptures more, with the definite object of finding the Saviour! Probably, the great majority of unconverted people never read their Bibles at all; or they read only just enough to satisfy their curiosity, or their conscience. Perhaps they read the Bible as a part of literature which cannot be quite ignored; but they do not take down the Holy Book, and read it carefully and prayerfully, saying, "Oh, that I might find holiness here! Oh, that I might find Christ here!" If they did, it would not be long before they found Jesus. Well does Dr. Watts sing, —

"Laden with guilt, and full of fears,
 I fly to thee, my Lord,
 And not a glimpse of hope appears
 But in thy written Word.
 The volume of my Father's grace
 Does all my griefs assuage;
 Here I behold my Saviour's face
 Almost in every page."

He who reads the Bible with the view of finding Christ, will not be long before some passage of Scripture will seem to leap up, to attract his attention, as though it were set on fire, and then it will speak to him of Jesus, whispering to him of the great sacrifice on Calvary, and speaking to his heart of divine love and mercy. Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be, — in the pages of Scripture, — and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus.

But then Philip also gave himself to prayer. We are not told so, but we feel sure of it. He asked the Lord to reveal Christ to him, to guide him to where the Christ would be, to let him know the Christ. Oh, if you want to be saved, be much in prayer! I do not mean merely saying prayers; what is the good of that? I do not mean simply saying fine words of your own, merely for the sake of uttering them. Prayer is communing with God; it is asking the Lord for what you really feel that you need. What waggon-loads of sham prayers are shot down at God's door, as if they were so much rubbish thrown away! Let it not be so with your prayers; but speak to the Lord out of your very soul when you come to the throne of grace. I cannot give you a better prayer than the one we have been singing, —

“Gracious Lord, incline Thine ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear;
Hear my never-ceasing cry;
Give me Christ, or else I die.

“Lord, deny me what Thou wilt,
Only ease me of my guilt;
Suppliant at Thy feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die.

“Thou dost freely save the lost!
Only in Thy grace I trust:
With my earnest suit comply;
Give me Christ, or else I die.

“Thou hast promised to forgive
All who in Thy Son believe;
Lord, I know Thou canst not lie;
Give me Christ, or else I die.”

With the open Bible before you to guide your understanding, kneel down, and say, "O God, graciously reveal Christ to me by thy Holy Spirit; bring me to know him, bring me this day to find him as my own Saviour!"

It is certain, also, that Philip realized that he might claim the Messiah for himself. One of the things that every man, who would find the Saviour, must do, is to make sure of his right to come and take the Saviour. The question that puzzles many is, "May I have the Saviour?" My dear friends, every sinner in the world is permitted to come and trust the Saviour, if he wills to do so. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "But," asks some troubled soul, "will Christ have me?" That is not the question; the question is, "Will you have Christ?" He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is you who cast out the Saviour, not the Saviour who casts you out. The bolt to the door is on the inside; it is you who have bolted it, and it is you who must undo the bolt, and invite the Saviour to enter your heart. He is willing enough to come in; wherever there is a soul that wants him, he comes at once; therefore, do not raise any quibbling questions about whether a sinner may come to Christ, or may not come. Is he not bidden to come? We are told to preach the gospel to every creature, and he who gave us our great commission also added, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Philip accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you ask, "What am I to do that I may find the Saviour?" Well, what you have to do is practically this, accept him. If you were sick, and the doctor stood before you, with the medicine ready prepared, you would not say, "What am I to do with this medicine, sir? Am I to rub my hand on the outside of the bottle?" You know very well that there are certain directions as to how much is to be taken, and how often. What you have to do with the medicine is to take it. "But I cannot make that medicine work for my restoration." Who said you could? All you have to do is to take it. It is just this that you have to do with Christ; take him, accept him, receive him. Remember the twelfth verse of this chapter out of which our text is taken: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." That is it, you see, receive him, believe on his name. "But surely I am to do some good works." Certainly, you will do good works after you have received Christ; but for your soul's salvation, you

are to do no good works, but simply to receive Christ. “Oh, but I must lead a holy life!” Yes, and you will lead a holy life after you have received Christ; but in order to the leading of a holy life you must have a new heart, and to get a new heart, you have to receive Christ. He will change you, he will renew you, he will make you a new creature in himself. What you have to do is to receive him, and to believe on his name. O my dear hearers, I do trust that I am speaking to some this evening who will understand what I am saying. I fear that I am addressing many who will not believe, though I may put the truth as plainly as it can be preached. You know that you may hold a candle right against a blind man’s eyes, and yet he will not see even then. The Holy Spirit must open your eyes to see what is meant by this receiving Christ, or else you will not understand what you are to do. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to bring anything to Christ; you are to come to him just as you are, and he will bring to you everything that you need. Then, when you have accepted him by the simple act of faith, you will say with Philip, “We have found Jesus.” That is the convert’s description, and a very good one, too: “We have found Jesus.”

II. But now, secondly, what is THE HOLY GHOST’S DESCRIPTION? I will read to you the very words again; here they are: “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philipians ” Jesus finds Philip before Philip finds Jesus; Philip finds Jesus because Jesus has found Philipians

Now, notice, that this is the previous work; it came before Philip’s own finding. Jesus would go forth into Galilee to find Philipians Dear friends, I recollect very well that, after I had found the Lord, I did not at first fully understand the doctrines of grace. I had heard them preached; but I had not comprehended them. I think at the time I should have been very much puzzled with the doctrine of election, if anybody had spoken to me about it; but I was sitting down, one day, gratefully reflecting on what God had done for me. I knew that my sins were pardoned, I knew that I was accepted in Christ Jesus, and I knew that I was renewed in heart, and in one moment the revelation came to me, “All this is the work of God.” The instant I saw that truth, I said to myself, “Yes, that is the fact, and God be glorified for it! But why has this great work been wrought in me?” I knew

that there was no merit in me before the Lord had dealt in mercy with my soul, so I said to myself, "This is the effect of sovereign distinguishing grace." Then I understood in a moment how it is that God begins with us, and that it is God's will and God's eternal purpose, which, after all, lie deeper down than our will or our purpose; and God's will and God's eternal purpose must have the glory. What a revelation it was to me! I saw the doctrines of grace immediately; and I think that anybody who has been brought to find the Saviour, and who prayerfully studies the reasons for his salvation, can see the same truth that the Lord revealed to me. Because, first of all, you began to be thoughtful, did you not? Who made you thoughtful? You would never have found the Saviour if you had not become thoughtful instead of careless and indifferent. Who made you think of divine things? What influence was it which wrought upon you, and caused you to feel that you must think about eternity, and heaven, and hell? Surely it was God the Holy Ghost going forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, and dealing with you in mercy.

Then you had a sense of your need and of your sinfulness. There was a time when you had no such sense; then, who gave it to you? Where do you think that repentance, that sorrow for sin, that desire after Christ, came from? Did all that grow in your own fallen human nature? Ah, believe me, that dunghill never brought forth such fair flowers as these! No, it was Christ who sowed the good seed in your soul; it was he who made you feel your need of him.

Next, when you read the Bible, you understood it. You perceived that Jesus was the only Saviour of sinners, you saw his fitness to meet your case, and you understood the plan of salvation. Who made you understand it? I know that it is plain enough for a child to comprehend; but no one ever does understand spiritual things except by the operation of the Spirit of God. It was the Holy Spirit who gave you the spiritual power by which you were able to grasp the simple truth concerning the way of salvation.

Then you began to pray. I have spoken of that matter already. But who taught you to pray? You had not been accustomed to real prayer; you had often had great mouthfuls of words, that was all; but now you began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, the groaning of your spirit, and the anguish of your heart, as you cried to God! Who gave you that anguish? Who broke you all to pieces, and made every broken bone cry out

for mercy? Who, indeed, but Christ who wrought mightily in your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit?

And when you yielded yourself up to Christ, when you believed in Jesus, and found salvation, where did that faith come from? Is it not always the work of the Spirit of God? Is not faith the gift of God, and do you not confess that it is so in your case? Once, when I was a little child, I thought I saw a needle moving across the table; and I should have been wondering who made the needle march as it did, but I was old enough to understand that somebody was moving a magnet underneath the table, and the needle was following the magnet which I could not see. Thus the Lord, with his mighty magnet of grace, is often at work upon the hearts of men, and we think that their desire after God, and their faith in Christ, are of themselves. In a sense, the desire and the faith are their own; but there is a divine force that is at work upon them, producing these results. It is Jesus finding Philip, though Philip does not know it. Philip thinks that he is finding Jesus, but behind the veil it is Jesus finding Philip. This was the previous work.

And, dear friends, this was very delightful work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice how it is put: "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip." O my blessed Lord, how he will go forth to find a soul! A journey is never too long for him, and he never wastes a day. "The day following Jesus would go forth, and findeth Philip." Oh, may my Lord delight to come forth, and find some of you! You are to-night in a place where he has found a good many; I pray that he may find some of you. Perhaps you do not know how it was that you came here. You did not mean to come out to-night; but here you are in this crowd, in the thick of this great throng. My Lord has found many a precious jewel here; to its own self it seemed nothing but a poor pebble, but to him it was a diamond of the first water. O my Master, find some more of thy jewels to-night! Lord Jesus, come and find Philip, and find Mary, and then let Philip and Mary declare that they have found thee!

When our dear Master goes forth to find a soul, it is very effectual work. He said to Philip, "Follow me." I will gladly end my sermon just here if my Master will preach to some of you his two-worded sermon, "Follow me," "Follow me," "FOLLOW ME." "Come, poor soul, you do not know the way! 'Follow me.' You want some one to go before you, to be your

leader. 'Follow me.' You want some one to be your shelter, your companion, your all. 'Follow me.'" That is what you have to do, good woman. You have been worrying about what you have heard from different preachers; Christ says to you, "Follow me." That is what you have to do, young man. You have been reading those rubbishing modern thought books till you do not know whether you are on your head or on your heels. Burn them. Jesus says, "Follow me." I know that some of you have been distracted with all sorts of silly talk; let that go to the dogs. Jesus says, "Follow me." The crucified Saviour says, "Follow me." Take him for your atonement. The risen Saviour says, "Follow me." Take him for your life. The Saviour on the throne says, "Follow me." Take him for your joy. The Saviour coming in glory hereafter says, "Follow me." Take him to be your hope. "Follow me," "Follow me," that is the text for to-night, and that is the sermon, too. Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me," and Philip followed him directly; and he not only followed Christ himself, but he began immediately to try to get others to follow him.

Please to notice also that Philip was found by Christ in a very different way from the other disciples. Two of them had been found through the teaching of John the Baptist; but Philip had apparently had no teaching. Another of the little company had been found through the private call of his brother; Philip may not have had any relative or friend to speak to him, but the Saviour just said to him, "Follow me," and he followed him. Dear friends, do not begin comparing your conversion with somebody else's. If the Lord Jesus Christ calls you, and says to you, "Follow me," and you follow him, if there never was another soul converted in exactly the same way, it does not matter at all. If you have come to him, if you have trusted in him, you are saved.

The pith of all that I have to say is this. Do not get worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose, and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit, and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when he bids you. They are perfectly consistent. Some persons have asked me at times to reconcile these two things; and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them." It would be quite as easy to state them as to meet them, for in fact there are none. "Oh, but," says one, "you tell me to believe in Christ, and yet you constantly preach that faith is the work of the Spirit of God." I

do. "And yet you say that men are to choose Christ?" I do. "Well, how do you reconcile those two things?" Show me that there is any difficulty about the two things, and then I will reconcile them. You imagine the difficulty, for there is none in reality, there does not exist any in practical life. I believe that God has predestinated whether I am going down to the Lord's supper at the close of this service; but I shall go down as well as my legs can carry me. "Oh!" say you, "you make it out to be a matter of your own free will?" Yes, I do. "And yet you believe it to be God's eternal purpose?" Yes, I do. "Well, then, reconcile the two things." Again I say that there is no difficulty in the case, there is nothing to be reconciled, for both statements are true. You might as well ask me to reconcile the land and the water, or to reconcile the dog star, Sirius, and a farthing rushlight. There is no quarrel between them, and I have no time to waste on needless argument. Come you to Christ; and if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you. If you find the Saviour, it will be because the Saviour first found you. Perhaps, in heaven, you may see some difficulties, and get them explained; down here, you need not see them, and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's grace, from first to last; yet is it true that the grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning, — to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

I have done when I have said this one thing more. Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, were all of Bethsaida: "Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." These three good men, these three apostles, were all of Bethsaida. That ought to be some comfort to many of you, my dear hearers, because there are numbers of you, who are here to-night, who are of Bethsaida. Sitting all round me, I see people who, I believe, are of Bethsaida. "Oh!" say you, "we never were there in all our lives." Listen. Bethsaida was one of the places in which Christ had done many of his mighty works; and you remember that, when the people repented not, Jesus uttered over them that sad lamentation, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou,

Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.”

Now, there are some of you here who have heard the gospel for many years, and have seen the power of the grace of God in your families, and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than it will be for you, inasmuch as you have rejected the Saviour. But, as there were these three men, Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, who were of Bethsaida, — and I should think that the home of James and John was not very far off from the same place, — why should not you come to Christ? Why should not you become members of his Church, and, if it be the Lord’s will, preachers of his Word? God grant that it may be so!

Oh, how I long in my soul for the salvation of every one of you! Many of you, who have come here to-night, are strangers to me. I trust that you will not be strangers to my Master. To-night, I pray you, here in the very heat of midsummer, ere yet the harvest shall be past, and the summer shall be ended, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Receive Christ, trust in him. God grant that you may do so, for Jesu’s sake! Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

A QUESTION FOR A QUESTIONER

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's Day Morning, May 31st, 1885, by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” — Psalm 77:9

Asaph was very grievously troubled in spirit. The deep waters were not only around his barque, but they had come in even unto his soul. When the spirit of a man is wounded, then is he wounded indeed; and such was the case with this man of God. In the time of his trouble he was attacked with doubts and fears; so that he was made to question the very foundations of things. Had he not taken to continual prayer he had perished in his affliction; but he cried unto God with his voice, and the Lord gave ear unto him. Nor did he only pray, but he used the fittest means for escaping from his despondency. Very wisely this good man argued with himself, and sought to cure his unbelief. He treated himself homoeopathically, meeting like with like. As he was attacked by the disease of questioning, he gave himself questions as a medicine. Observe how he kills one question with another, as men fight fire with fire. Here we have six questions, one after another, each one striking at the very heart of unbelief. “Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?” If questions are raised at all let us go through with them; and as the Saviour answered one question of his opponents by another, so

may we also silence the questions of unbelief by further questions which shall strip our doubt of all disguises.

The question which makes our text is meant to end other questions. You may carry truth as far as ever you like, and it will always be truth. Truth is like those crystals which, when split up into the smallest possible fragments, still retain their natural form. You may break truth in pieces, you may do what you like with it, and it is truth throughout; but error is diverse within itself, and evermore bears its own death within itself. You can see its falsehood even in its own light. Bring it forward, strip it of its disguises, behold it in its naked form, and its deformity at once appears. Carry unbelief to its proper consequences, and you will revolt from it, and be driven by the grace of God to faith. Sometimes our doubts assume appearances which are not their own, and so are hard to deal with; but if we make them take their own natural shapes, we shall easily destroy them. The question before us is what the logician would call a *reductio ad absurdum*; it reduces doubt to an absurdity; it puts into plain and truthful words the thought of an unbelieving mind, and at once it is seen to be a horrible notion. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?" One might smile while reading a suggestion so absurd, and yet there is grave cause for trembling in the profanity of such a question. "Hath God forgotten?" We stumble at the first word. How can God forget? "Hath God forgotten to be?" We snap the question at that point, and it is blasphemous. It is no better when we give it as a whole, — "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" The bare idea is both ridiculous and blasphemous. Again, I say, it is wise when we are vexed with evil questioning to put down the questions in black and white, and expose them to the daylight. Drive the wretched things out of their holes; hunt them in the open; and they will soon be destroyed. Let the light of God into the dark cellar of your despondency, and you will soon quit the den in sheer disgust at your own folly. Make a thought appear to be absurd and you have gone a long way towards conquering it.

The question now before us is one of very wide application. I shall not attempt to suggest all the ways in which it may be employed, but I am going to turn it to three uses this morning. The first is for the man of God in distress. Let him take this question, and put it to his own reason and common sense, and especially to his own faith, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" When we have handled the question in that way, we will pass it

over to the seeking sinner who is despondent, and we will ask him whether he really believes that God hath forgotten to be gracious. When this is done, we may have a moment or two left for the Christian worker who is dispirited, who cannot do his work as he would wish to do, and who mourns over the little result coming from it. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Will you be allowed to go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and will you never come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you? We shall have quite enough matter to fill up our time, and many fragments remaining when the feast is over. May God the Holy Spirit bless the word!

I. TO THE MAN OF GOD IN DISTRESS, this question is commended, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

What kind of distress is that which suggests such a question? Where had Asaph been? In what darkness had he wandered? In what tangled wood had he lost himself? How came he to get such a thought into his mind?

I answer, first, this good man had been troubled by unanswered prayers. "In the day of my trouble," he says, — "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord"; and he seems to say that though he sought the Lord his griefs were not removed. He was burdened, and he cried unto God beneath the burden, but the burden was not lightened. He was in darkness, and he craved for light, but not a star shone forth. Nothing is more grievous to the sincere pleader than to feel that his petitions are not heeded by his God. It is a sad business to have gone up, like Elijah's servant, seven times, and yet to have seen no cloud upon the sky in answer to your importunity. It tries a man to spend all night in wrestling, and to have won no blessing from the covenant angel. To ask, and not to receive; to seek, and not to find; to knock, and to see no open door, — these are serious trials to the heart, and tend to extort the question, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Unanswered prayer is very staggering even to strong faith; but the weak faith of a tried believer is hard put to it by long delays and threatened denials. When the mercy-seat itself ceases to yield us aid, what can we do? You will not wonder, then, considering your own tendency to doubt, that this man of God, when his prayers did not bring him deliverance, cried out, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Besides that, he was enduring continued suffering. Our text says, “My sore ran in the night.” His wound was bleeding ever: there was no cessation to his pain. At night he woke up and wished it were morning, and when the daylight came he wished for night again, if, perchance, he might obtain relief; but none came. Pain of body, when it is continuous and severe, is exceedingly trying to our feeble spirits; but agony of soul is worse still. Give me the rack sooner than despair. Do you know what it is to have a keen thought working like an auger into your brain? Has Satan seemed to pierce and gimlet your mind with a sharp, cutting thought that would not be put aside? It is torment indeed to have a worm gnawing at your heart, a fire consuming your spirit: yet a true child of God may be thus tormented. When Asaph had prayed for relief, and the relief did not come, the temptation came to him to ask, “Am I always to suffer? Will the Lord never relieve me? It is written, ‘He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds’; has he ceased from that sacred surgery? ‘Hath God forgotten to be gracious?’”

In addition to this, the man of God was in a state of mind in which his depression had become inveterate. He says, “My soul refused to be comforted.” Many plasters were at hand, but he could not lay them upon the wound; many cordials offered themselves, but he could not receive them — his throat seemed closed. The meadows were green, but the gate was nailed up, and the sheep could not get in; the brooks flowed softly, but he could not reach their margin to lie down and drink. Asaph was lying at the pool of Bethesda, and he saw others step in to be healed, but he had no man to put him into the pool when the waters were troubled. His mind had become confirmed in its despondency, and his soul refused to be comforted.

More than that, there seemed to be a failure of the means of grace for him. “I remembered God, and was troubled.” Some of God’s people go up to the house of the Lord where they were accustomed to unite in worship with delight, but they have no delight now; they even go to the communion-table, and eat the bread and drink the wine, but they do not receive the body and blood of Christ to the joy of their faith. Anon they get them to their chambers, and open their Bibles, and bow their knees, and remember God; but every verse seems to condemn them; their prayers accuse them, and God himself seems turned to be their enemy; and then it

is little wonder that unbelief exclaims, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?”

At the back of all this there was another trouble for Asaph, namely, that he could not sleep. He says, “Thou holdest mine eyes waking.” It seemed as if the Lord himself held up his eyelids, and would not let them close in sleep. Others on their beds were refreshed with “kind nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep”; but when Asaph sought his couch he was more unrestful there than when he was engaged in the business of the day. We may speak of sleeplessness very lightly, but among afflictions it is one of the worst that can happen to men. When the chamber of repose becomes a furnace of anguish it goes hard with a man. When the Psalmist could not find even a transient respite in sleep, his weakness and misery drove him to say, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?”

Moreover, there was one thing more: he lost the faculty of telling out his grief: “I am so troubled that I cannot speak.” There are some people to whom we would not tell our trouble, for we know they would not understand it, for they have never been in deep waters themselves; there are others to whom we could not tell our trouble, though they might help us, because we feel ashamed to do so. To be compelled to silence is a terrible increase to anguish: the torrent is swollen when its free course is prevented. A dumb sorrow is sorrow indeed. The grief that can talk will soon pass away; that misery which is wordless is endless. The brook that ripples and prattles as it flows is shallow; but deep waters are silent in their flow. When a man falls under the power of a dumb spirit it needs Christ himself to come and cast the devil out of him, for he is brought into a very grievous captivity. We who know what a poor thing human nature is when it is brought into affliction, are not surprised that the man of God said in such a case, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?”

Having thus, you see, put the doubt in the most apologetic style, and mentioned the excuses which mitigate the sin of the question, I am now going to expose its unreasonableness and sinfulness, by considering what answers we may give to such a question? I shall endeavour to answer it by making it answer itself —

“Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” Answer: Hath God forgotten anything? If he could forget, could he be God? Is it not absurd to speak of

him as short of memory, of whose understanding there is no searching? Shall we speak of him as forgetting, when to his mind all things are present, and the past and the future are ever before him as in a map which lies open before the beholder's eye? Oh child of God, why doest thou talk thus? Oh troubled heart, wilt thou insult thy God, wilt thou narrow the infinity of his mind? Can God forget? Thou art forgetful. Perhaps thou canst scarce remember from hour to hour thine own words and thine own promises; but is the Lord such an one as thou art? Not even the least thing is passed over by him. He hath not forgotten the young ravens in their nests, but he heareth when they cry. He hath not forgotten a single blade of grass, but giveth to each its own drop of dew. He hath not forgotten the sea monsters down deep in the caverns of ocean. He hath not forgotten a worm that hides itself away beneath the sod; therefore banish the thought once for all, that thy God hath forgotten anything, much less that he hath forgotten to be gracious.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Then hath he forgotten an old, long, ancient, aye, eternal habit of his heart. Hast thou not heard that his mercy endureth for ever? Did he not light up the lamps of heaven because of his mercy? Do we not sing, "To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever. The sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever"? Since the creation hath he not in providence always been gracious? Is it not his rule to open his hand, and supply the want of every living thing? Did he not give his Son to redeem mankind? Hath he not sent his Spirit to turn men from darkness to light? After having been gracious all these myriads of ages, after having manifested his love and his grace at such a costly rate, hath he forgotten it? Thou, O man, takest up a practice, and thou layest it down; thou doest a thing now and then, and then thou ceasest from thy way, but shall the eternal God who has always been gracious forget to be gracious? Oh, Lord, forgive the thought.

"Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Why, then, he must have forgotten his purpose! Hath thou not heard that or ever the earth was he purposed to redeem unto himself a people who should be his own chosen, his children, his peculiar treasure, a people near unto him? Before he made the heavens and the earth, had he not planned in his own mind that he would manifest the fulness of his grace toward his people in Christ Jesus, and

dost thou think that he has turned from his eternal purpose, and rent up his divine decrees, and burned the book of life, and changed the whole course of his operations among the sons of men? Dost thou know what thou art at to talk so? Doth he not say, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”? Hath he said, and will he not do it? Hath he purposed, and shall it not come to pass? Banish, then, the thought of his forgetting to be gracious.

“Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” Then he must have forgotten his own covenant; for what was the purport of his covenant with Jesus Christ, the second Adam, on the behalf of his people? Is it not called a covenant of grace? Is not grace the spirit and tenor and object of it? Of old he said, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy”; and in his covenant he ordains to show this grace to as many as are in Christ Jesus. Now, if a man’s covenant be confirmed it stands fast. Nothing that occurs after a covenant has been made can alter it; and God having once made a covenant turneth not from his promise and his oath. The law which was four hundred and thirty years after the covenant made with Abraham could not change the promises which the Lord had made to the believing seed, neither can any accident or unforeseen circumstance make the covenant of grace null and void; indeed, there are no accidents with God, nor any unforeseen circumstances with him. He hath lifted his hand to heaven and hath sworn; he hath declared, “If my covenant be not with day and night, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob.” The Lord hath not forgotten his covenant with day and night, neither will he cast off his believing people. He cannot, therefore, forget to be gracious.

More than that, when thou sayest, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” dost thou not forget that in such a case he must have forgotten his own glory? for the main of his glory lies in his grace. In that which he does out of free favour and love to undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving men, he displays the meridian splendour of his glory. His power, his wisdom, and his immutability praise him; but in the forefront of all shines out his grace. This is his darling attribute; by this he is illustrious on earth and in heaven above. Hath God forgotten his own glory? Doth a man forget his honour? Doth a man turn aside from his own name and fame? He may do so in a

moment of madness; but the thrice holy God hath not forgotten the glory of his name, nor forgotten to be gracious.

Listen, and let unbelief stand rebuked. If God hath forgotten to be gracious, then he must have forgotten his own Son, he must have forgotten Calvary and the expiatory sacrifice offered there; he must have forgotten him that is ever with him at his right hand, making intercession for transgressors; he must have forgotten his pledge to him that he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Canst thou conceive that? It is verging upon blasphemy to suppose such a thing; yet it must be that he has forgotten his own Son if he hath forgotten to be gracious.

Once more; if this were the case, the Lord must have forgotten his own self; for grace is of the essence of his nature, since God is love. We forget ourselves and disgrace ourselves, but God cannot do so. Oh beloved, it is part and parcel of God's own nature that he should show mercy to the guilty and be gracious to those who trust in him. Hast thou forgotten as a father thy children? Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? These things are barely possible, but it is utterly impossible that the great Father should forget himself by forgetting his children; that the great Lord who hath taken us to be his peculiar heritage and his jewels should cease to value us and forget to be gracious to us.

I think I hear some one say, "I do not think God hath forgotten to be gracious except to me." Doth God make any exceptions? Doth he not speak universally when he addresses his children? Remember, if God forgot to be gracious to one of his believing people he might forget to be gracious to them all. If there were one instance found in which his love failed, then the foundations would be removed, and what could the righteous do? The Good Shepherd doth not preserve some of his sheep, but all of them; and it is not concerning the strong ones of his flock that he saith, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish;" but he has said it of all the sheep, aye, and of the smallest lamb of all the flock, of the most scabbed and wounded, of all that he has purchased with his blood. The Lord hath not forgotten himself in any one instance; but he is faithful to all believers.

Now, let us attend to the amendment of the question. Shall I tell thee, friend, thou who hast put this question, what the true question is which thou oughtest to ask thyself? It is not, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” but “Hast thou forgotten to be grateful?” Why, thou enjoyest many mercies even now. It is grace which allows thee to live after having asked such a vile question. Grace is all around thee, if thou wilt but open thine eyes, or thine ears. Thou hadst not been spared after so much sin if God had forgotten to be gracious.

Listen: Hast thou not forgotten to be believing? God’s word is true, why dost thou doubt it? Is he a liar? Has he ever played thee false? Which promise of his has failed? Time was when thou didst trust him; then thou knewest he was gracious; but thou art doubting now without just cause; thou art permitting an evil heart of unbelief to draw thee aside from the living God. Know this, and repent of it, and trust thy best Friend.

Hast thou not also forgotten to be reverent? Else how couldst thou ask such a question? Should a man say of God that he has forgotten to be gracious? Should he imagine such a thing? Should the keenest grief drive to such profanity? Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Shall anyone of us begin to doubt that grace, which has kept us out of the bottomless pit, and spared us to this hour? Oh, heir of glory, favoured as thou hast been to bathe thy forehead in the sunlight of heaven full often, and then to lean thy head on the Saviour’s bosom, — is it out of thy mouth that this question comes, — “Hath God forgotten to be gracious”? Call it back and bow thine head unto the dust, and say, “My Lord, have mercy upon thy servant, that he hath even thought thus for an instant.”

“Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” Why, surely thou hast forgotten thyself, or thou wouldest not talk so: thou hast forgotten that thou owest everything to thy Lord, and art indebted to him even for the breath in thy nostrils. Thou hast forgotten the precious blood of Jesus; thou hast forgotten the mercy-seat; thou hast forgotten providence; thou hast forgotten the Holy Spirit; thou hast forgotten all that the Lord has done for thee: surely, thou hast forgotten all good things, or thou wouldest not speak thus. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and leave the dunghill of thy despair, and sing, “His mercy endureth for ever.” Say in thy soul, — “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

Thus much to the child of God. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, apply it to every troubled heart.

II. Furthermore, I desire to talk a little with THE SEEKING SINNER IN DESPONDENCY. You have not yet found joy and peace through believing, and therefore I will first describe your case, and what it is that has made you say, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?”

You labour under a sense of guilt; you know that you have transgressed against God, and you feel that this is a terrible thing, involving wrath to the uttermost. The arrows of God are sticking in your soul, and rankling there. You cannot trifle with sin as you once did; it burns like a fiery poison in your veins! You have been praying to get rid of that sense of sin, but it deepens. The case I am stating is very clear to every child of God; but it is not at all clear to the man who is enduring it. He cries, “The more I pray, the more I go to hear the word, the more I read the Bible, the blacker sinner I seem to be. ‘Hath God forgotten to be gracious?’”

Moreover, a sense of weakness is increasing upon you. You thought that you could pray; but now you cannot pray. You thought it the easiest thing in the world to believe; but now the grappling-irons will not lay hold upon the promise, and you find no rest. You cannot now perform those holy acts which you once thought to be so easy. Your power is dried up, your glory is withered. Now you groan out, “I would but I can’t repent, then all would easy be. Alas, I have no hope, no strength; I am reduced to utter weakness.” We understand all this, but you do not; and we do not wonder at your crying, — “Hath God forgotten to be gracious.” “Oh, but sir, I have been crying to God that he would be pleased to deliver me from sin, and the more I try to be holy the more I am tempted; I never knew such horrible thoughts before, nor discovered such filthiness in my nature before. When I get up in the morning I resolve that I will go straight all the day, and before long I am more crooked than ever. I feel worse rather than better. The world tempts me, the devil tempts me, the flesh tempts me, everything goes wrong with me. ‘Hath God forgotten to be gracious’? I have prayed the Lord to give me peace, and he promises to give rest; but I am more uneasy than ever, and cannot rest where I used to do. I used to be very happy when I was at chapel on Sunday; I thought I was doing well to be at public worship; but now I fear that I only go as a formalist, and therefore I mock God, and make matters worse. I rested once in being a

teetotaller, in being a hard-working, honest, sober man; but now I see that I must be born again. I used to rest once in the idea that I was becoming quite religious; but now it seems to me that my betterness is a hollow sham, and all my old nests are pulled down.

My friend, I perfectly understand your case, and think well of it; for the like has happened to many of us. You must be divorced from self before you can be married to Christ; and that divorce must be made most clear and plain, or Jesus will never make a match with you. You must come clear away from self-righteousness, self-trust, self-hope, or else one of these days, when Jesus has saved you, there might be a doubt as to whether he is to have all the glory, or to go halves with self. He makes you nothing that he may be all in all to you. He grinds you to the dust that he may lift you out of it for ever. Meanwhile, I do not wonder that the question crosses your mind, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

Let me show how wrong the question is. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" If he has, he has forgotten what he used to know right well. David was foul with his adultery — remember that fifty-first Psalm — but how sweet was the prophet's message to the penitent king: "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die!" "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," was a prayer most graciously answered in that royal sinner's case. Remember Jonah, and how he went down to the bottom of the mountains in the whale's belly, and was brought even to hell's door; yet he lived to sing "Salvation is of the Lord," and was brought out of the depths of the sea. Remember Manasseh, who shed innocent blood very much, and yet the grace of God brought him among thorns, and made him a humble servant of the Lord. Remember Peter, how he denied his Master, but his Master forgave him, and bade him feed his sheep. Forget not the dying thief, and how in the extremity of death, filled with all the agonies of crucifixion, he looked to the Lord, and the Lord looked on him, and that day he was with the King in paradise. Think also of Saul of Tarsus, that chief of sinners, who breathed out threatenings against the people of God, and yet was struck down, and, before long was in mercy raised up again, and ordained to be a chosen vessel to bear the gospel among the heathen. If God has forgotten to be gracious, he has forgotten a line of things in which he has wrought great wonders, and in which his heart delighted from of old. It cannot be that he will turn away from that which is so dear to him.

“Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” Then why are all the old arrangements for grace still standing? There is the mercy-seat; surely that would have been taken away if God had forgotten to be gracious. The gospel is preached to you, and this is its assurance, “Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned.” If the Lord had forgotten to be gracious he would not have mocked you with empty words.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is still living, and still stands as a priest to make intercession for transgressors. Would that be the case if God had forgotten to be gracious? The Holy Spirit is still at work convincing and converting; would that be so if God had forgotten to be gracious? Oh brothers, while Calvary is still a fact, and the Christ has gone into the glory bearing his wounds with him, there is a fountain still filled with blood wherein the guilty may wash. While there is an atoning sacrifice there must be grace for sinners. I cannot enlarge on these points, for time flies so rapidly; but the continuance of the divine arrangements, the continuance of the Son of God as living and pleading, and the mission of the Holy Spirit as striving, regenerating, comforting — all this proves that God hath not forgotten to be gracious.

Remember that God himself must according to nature be ever gracious so long as men will put their trust in the great sacrifice. He has promised to be gracious to all who confess their sins and forsake them and look to Christ; and he cannot forget that word without a change which we dare not impute to him. God might sooner forget to be than forget to be gracious to those to whom he has promised his grace. He has promised to every poor, guilty, confessing soul that will come and put his trust in Christ that he will be gracious in pardoning sin, and so it must be.

I shall come to close quarters with you. I know your despair has driven you to the question, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” and I would silence it by putting other questions to you. Is it not you that have forgotten to believe in Christ? “I have been praying,” says one. That is all very well, but the gospel is, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” not “he that prays.” “I have been trying to come to Christ.” I know that, but I read nothing about this trying in Holy Scripture, and I fear your trying is that which keeps you from Jesus. You are told to believe in Christ, not to try to believe. A minister in America, some time ago, was going up the aisle of his church during a revival, when a young

man earnestly cried to him, "Sir, can you tell me the way to Christ?" "No," was the answer, very deliberately given; "I cannot tell you the way to Christ." The young man answered, "I beg pardon; I thought you were a minister of the gospel." "So I am," was the reply. "How is it that you cannot tell me the way to Christ?" "My friend," said the minister, "there is no way to Christ. He is himself the way. All that believe in him are justified from all things. There is no way to Christ; Christ is here." O! my hearer, Christ himself is the way of salvation, and that way comes right down to your foot, and then leads right up to heaven. You have not to make a way to the Way, but at once to run in the way which lies before you. The way begins where you now are; enter it. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ now, and you are saved; and then you will no more ask the question, "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?"

"Oh," says one, "but I have been looking to reform myself and grow better, and I have done a good deal in that way." That is not the gospel; it is all very right and proper, but the gospel is, "He that believeth in him is not condemned." The other day I saw my bees swarming; they hung on a branch of a tree in a living mass; the difficulty was to get them into a hive. My man went with his veil over his face and began to put them into the skep; and I noticed that he was particularly anxious to get the queen bee into it; for if he once had her in the hive the rest would be sure to follow, and remain with her. Now, faith is the queen bee. You may get temperance, love, hope, and all those other bees into the hive; but the main thing is to get simple faith in Christ, and all the rest will come afterwards. Get the queen bee of faith, and all the other virtues will attend her.

"Alas!" cries one, "I have been listening to the gospel for years." That is quite right, for "faith cometh by hearing"; but recollect, we are not saved by mere listening, nor even by knowing, unless we advance to believing. The letter of the word is not life; it is the spirit of it which saves. When tea was first introduced into this country a person favoured a friend with a pound of it. It was exceedingly expensive, and when he met his friend next, he enquired, "Have you tried the tea?" "Yes, but I did not like it at all." "How was that? Everybody else is enraptured with it." "Why," said the other, "we boiled it in a saucepan, threw away the water, and brought the leaves to table; but they were very hard, and nobody cared for them." Thus many people keep the leaves of form, and throw away the spiritual

meaning. They listen to our doctrines, but fail to come to Christ. They throw away the true essence of the gospel, which is faith in Jesus. I pray you, do not act thus with what I preach. Do not bury yourself in my words, or even in the words of Scripture; but pass onward to the life and soul of their meaning, which is Christ Jesus, the sinner's hope. All the aroma of the gospel is in Christ; all the essence of the gospel is in Christ, and you have only to trust him to enjoy eternal life. You guilty, worthless sinner, you at the gates of hell, you who have nothing to recommend you, you who have no good works or good feelings, simply trust the merits of Christ, and accept the atonement made by his death, and you shall be saved, your sin shall be forgiven, your nature shall be changed, you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus, and you shall never say again, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

III. The time has gone; therefore THE DISAPPOINTED WORKER must be content with a few crumbs. You have been working for Christ, dear brother, and have fallen in to a very low state of heart, so that you cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" I know what state you are in. You say, "I do not feel as if I could preach; the matter does not flow. I do not feel as if I could teach; I search for instruction, and the more I pull the more I cannot get it." "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Can he not fill thine empty vessel again? Can he not give thee stores of thought, emotion, and language? He has used thee; can he not do so again? "Ah, but my friends have gone; I am in a village from which the people remove to London, and I lose my best helpers." Or, perhaps you say, "I work in a back street, and everybody is moving out into the suburbs." You have lost your friends, and they have forgotten you; but, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" You can succeed so long as the Lord is with you. Be of good courage; your best friend is left. He who made a speech in the Academy found that all his hearers had gone except Plato; but as Plato remained, the orator finished his address. They asked him how he could continue under the circumstances, and he replied that Plato was enough for an audience. So, if God be pleased with you, go on; the divine pleasure is more than sufficient. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Did not Wesley say when he was dying, "The best of all is, God is with us"? Therefore fear not the failure of friends.

“But, sir, the sinners I have to deal with are such tough ones: they reject my testimony; they grow worse instead of better; I do not think I can ever preach to them again.” “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” You cannot save them, but he can. “But I work in such a depraved neighbourhood, the people are sunk in poverty and drunkenness.” “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” Does not he know the way to save drunkards? Does not he know how to rescue the harlot and the whoremonger, and make them clean and chaste?

“Ah, but the church in which I labour is in a wretched state; the members are worldly, lukewarm, and divided. I have no brethren around me to pray for me, as you have; they are always squabbling and finding fault with one another.” That is a horrible business, but “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” Cannot God put you right, and your church right? If he begins with you by strengthening your faith, may you not be the means of healing all these divisions, and bringing these poor people into a better state of mind, and then converting the sinners round about you? “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?”

“Ah, well,” saith one, “I am ready to give it all up.” I hope you will not do so. If you have made up your mind to speak no more in the name of the Lord, I hope that word will be like fire in your bones; for if God has not forgotten to be gracious, provoked as he has been, how can you forget to be patient? Is it possible while God’s sun shines on you that you will refuse to shine on the fallen? If God continues to be gracious, you ought not to grow weary in well-doing.

Perhaps I speak to some dear brother who is very old and infirm; he can hardly hear, and scarcely see, so that he reads his Bible with difficulty. He gets to the service now, but he knows that soon he will be confined to his chamber, and then to his bed. His mind is sadly failing him; he is quite a wreck. Take this home with you, my aged brother, and keep it for your comfort if you never come out again: “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” Oh, no; the Lord hath said, “Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” Having loved his own which were in the world, the Lord Jesus loved them unto the end; and he will love you to the end. When the last scene comes, and you close your eyes in death, blessed be his name, you shall know that he has not forgotten you. “I will never leave thee, nor

forsake thee," is the Lord's promise, and his people's sheet-anchor. Therefore, let us not fear when our frail tabernacles are taken down, but let us rejoice that God hath not forgotten to be gracious. Though our bodies will sink into the dust, they will ere long rise again, and we shall be in glory for ever with the Lord. Blessed be his name. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

*KEPT FROM INIQUITY***A Sermon**

Intended for Reading on Lord's-day Morning, September 29th, 1895,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On Thursday Evening, September 22nd, 1887.

“I kept myself from mine iniquity” — Psalm 18:23

In our reading we had a very wonderful description of God's delivering mercy towards his servant David. He was very peculiarly tried in the court of Saul; he deserved so well of the king that it was doubly hard for him to be treated so ill. He had been the deliverer of his country when he slew Goliath, yet he was hunted as if he had been the grossest of malefactors. He had to fly for his life, like a partridge upon the mountains, and all the while, no doubt, Saul and his partisans accused him of all manner of evil. There was scarcely any bad thing which they did not attribute to David; but he was upright before God, and he dared to challenge the investigation of the Most High, for he was sincere and true to the core. He proved by his conduct that he was so; for when Saul was in his hands, on two memorable occasions when he might readily have taken his life, he disdained to do so. He would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and in great grace, in his own good time, God was pleased to deliver his servant. If men blow out the candle of a Christian's reputation, God will light it again; if he does not do so in this life, remember that at the resurrection there will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the

kingdom of their Father.” It is, after all, of very small account what is said by men whose breath is in their nostrils. “They say. What do they say? Let them say.” Let them say till they have done saying; it little matters what they say; yet, to a sensitive spirit, like that of David, the tongue is a very sharp instrument, it cutteth like a razor, and pierceth even to the bones. He felt, therefore, the slander of many, and was sometimes greatly troubled by it. However, God was pleased to work a very marvelous deliverance for him. It seemed as if the Lord would sooner shake the earth to atoms, and crush the arches of heaven, than fail to deliver his servant. He will do so still, depend upon it. “He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

David attributes his providential deliverance to the mercy of God by which he had been kept clear in his conduct: “I kept myself from mine iniquity.” Whatever you do, if you do right, God will see you through; but, whoever you may be, if you turn aside to crooked ways, you will soon fall into a bog. If you try to carve for yourself, you will probably cut your own fingers. He who thinks that he can do better by suppressing truth, or by speaking falsehood, or by acting contrary to the dictates of his conscience, will find that he has made a great mistake. Do thou so trust in God as to hold to thine integrity. “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” Ponder the path of thy feet, and God will bring thee through as surely as he is alive, which is saying much more than if I said as surely as thou art alive; for, as the Lord liveth, before whom we stand, he will not forsake the righteous, nor cast off them that serve him faithfully.

This is the passage we have to consider, “I kept myself from mine iniquity.” Here is, first, *a personal danger*: “mine iniquity.” And, secondly, here is *a special guard*: “I kept myself.” And then, thirdly, here is *a happy result*. David could say, as he looked back upon his life, “I kept myself from mine iniquity.” There was no boasting in this declaration; but as his enemies accused him falsely, like an honest man he defended himself, for he was able truthfully to say, “I kept myself from mine iniquity.”

I. Well now, here is, first, A PERSONAL DANGER: “mine iniquity.”

This is a dreadful possession to have in the house; a man had better have a cage of cobras than have an iniquity, yet we have each of us to deal at home with some special form of sin. It is said that there is a skeleton in every house. I do not know whether that is true; but I do know that there is something very much allied to a skeleton, that is, the body of this death with which we all have to deal; and it takes a special shape in each good man. There is some particular sin which he may call “mine iniquity.” Not only is there the general iniquity which affects the whole race, but each man has his own particular form of it: “All we like sheep have gone astray; *we have turned every one to his own way.*” There is a general sin, but there is a particularity in it, too; each man has his own way of sinning, so that he can speak of “mine iniquity.”

Let us think of the particular form of iniquity with which some of us have to do. It takes its speciality, perhaps, *from our natural constitution*. He who judges all men alike does them an injustice. There are some who have but little tendency to a particular form of evil, but they have a very great inclination towards some other sin. Some are sanguine; they are expecting great things, and they fall into the sin of expecting to drink sweet waters from the cisterns of this world. There are some of quite another temperament, who are inclined to despondency, perhaps to suspicion; they may fall into mistrust, or various forms of unbelief, and even into despair, which will be very grievous to the God who is ever gracious. There are some men who, from their very parentage, are inclined to drunkenness or to unchastity. There are others, favoured by God with a godly ancestry who, if they were left to themselves, would not probably fall into either of these forms of sin, yet they might be proud of their own integrity, and proud of their own uprightness; and is not pride as great a sin as those more open transgressions? Depend on it, my dear friend, thou hast some tendency peculiar to thyself, and there is a special point where thou liest open to the attacks of temptation. Happy will that man be who so knows himself that he sets a double watch against that postern gate through which the adversary is apt to creep in the dark. Peculiar constitutions may lead to special forms of sin, and it behoves the godly man to keep himself from his own iniquity.

Our tendency is to decry the particular form of sin that we find in others. We hold up our hands as if we were quite shocked. Better look in the looking-glass than look out at the window. Looking out of the window, thou seest one for whom thou art not responsible; but looking in the glass, thou seest one of whom thou must give account to God, and thou wilt do well to ask God to keep that one. Thou wilt, likely enough, within a day's march, not see a much worse man than he is, if thou dost know him well. I remember Mr. Berridge's quaint joke. He had, hanging round his room, the portraits of many ministers; and he would say to his friend, "Here is Whitefield, here is Wesley, here is So-and- so;" and then, leading his visitor to a looking-glass, he would say, "Here is the devil." Yes, he is somewhere about there where thou art looking. If thou lookest long enough, thou mayest detect some of his handiwork at any rate, for there is something of his work about us all. Sin, therefore, may be something peculiar to constitution.

But any man may also know that "mine iniquity" may be *engendered by education*. How impressible we are in childhood! We bear the print of our mother's fingers when we are fifty years of age, and it is not gone from us even when we are old and grey-headed. Things that were done at our father's home are likely to be done in our own home. Things that we saw, things that we heard, when we were very young, may abide with us, and help to shape our whole life. May God help us so to look back upon our early training as to discover the defects of it, and, not laying the sin upon others, which would be a wicked perversion of the truth, yet let us recollect that, as we lived in a sinful generation, we have acquired some taint therefrom, and we have need to watch against the sins which were taught us when we were young, especially any of you who have been rescued by grace out of homes of drunkenness and debauchery! I bless the Lord that there are many here who have been brought by sovereign grace out of very dens of iniquity. There are some here who are, so far as they are aware, the only ones of all their household who know the Lord; and when they go home to-night, it will be a great pain to them, as they cross the threshold, to think how very different the atmosphere will be from that in the house of God where they have worshipped. Well, my dear brother or sister, we sympathize with you in your trial, and pray the Lord that you may carefully watch and that you may be kept from your iniquity.

No doubt there are certain forms of iniquity which grow *out of our particular condition*. The young man has his iniquity; it is not the iniquity of the aged. The young man is tempted to sinful pleasure, the old man to covetousness. Each period of life has its own special snare. Pray, I beseech you, young people, middle-aged people, old people, pray the Lord that you may be kept from the peculiar iniquity of that part of the life-passage through which you are going. He who quits the shores of England for Australia may ask the guardian care of God while yet the white cliffs of Albion have scarcely melted from his view. Let him ask God's blessing as he passes through the middle passage of the Suez Canal; but let him not forget to pray when the captain tells him that, within a few days, he will come in sight of the southern shore. No, all along we need keeping.

It is so with our condition of life as to our outward circumstances. The rich man has his temptations. Few know how great they are, or they would not be so eager after riches. It is as hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is a natural impossibility, for so many difficulties surround the possession of riches; but with God all things are possible. Yet the poor man will not find that he has a much larger hole to go through. His straitened circumstances will not materially help him. Agur did well to pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." There are peculiar trials in each condition; and even the middle way between the two is not without its own special temptations; so that, whether thou hast much or little, pray God that thou mayest keep thyself from thine iniquity.

There are iniquities which come through prosperity. I have never yet prayed to God to preserve me in going up in a balloon, for I have never had any idea of entering one; but whenever you prosper very greatly, and especially when you prosper very fast, you are very like a man going up in a balloon. If people knew the danger, they would send in prayers to the Monday night prayer-meeting, asking that the Lord would have mercy upon the man who is greatly prospering, for there are very peculiar trials surrounding that condition. Oh, that men might be kept from that cleaving to the world and letting the Saviour go, which so often follows upon great success in life!

But equally must he pray who is in adversity. Oh, the ills of adversity! The worst ill of all is the tendency to doubt God, and to put forth your

hand unto iniquity in order to remove the heavy load. Pray the Lord, thou who art losing everything, that he will keep thee from thine iniquity. Thou needest not pray, like Pharaoh, "Take away the frogs;" but pray like David, "Take away mine iniquity." That is the prayer of the true child of God.

I may be speaking to some who have great talents. Well, you have need to pray, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity," for great talent is a very dangerous thing for a man to possess, a charge which needs great grace. And, if thou hast but one talent, thine iniquity may be to wrap it in a napkin, and hide it in the earth. There is a temptation in the one talent as well as in the five. Therefore, pray the Lord to keep thee from that iniquity which is often the accompaniment of the particular condition in which thou art found.

Brothers, there are some of you who have need to pray this prayer in reference to your calling. I do not think that any calling is free from temptation, but there are some positions in which the temptation is very terrible. I need not go into those which surround many of you in trade, when everybody seems to "cut the thing fine," as they say, and to cut the truth much finer than anything else, and say a great deal that is not true, under the notion that somehow or other it will help his business. If there be customs in your trade which all others follow, and which you know to be wrong, do not adopt them; but say, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity." You need not begin to say, "Those grocers, those milk-dealers, those publicans, all have their iniquities." Think about your own; quite enough iniquities may crowd into your shop without your thinking about the shops of other people. Pray the Lord that you may be kept from your iniquity.

And, O beloved, what iniquities there are which surround us all in daily life! Into what company can you go without being tempted? In this city, at the present time, the position of a Christian is very much like that of Lot in Sodom. I speak what I do know; I do not exaggerate the conditions which surround the lives of some Christian working-men and Christian working-women who are not able to let their children go into our streets by reason of the filthiness of the language that they would hear. Even round about this house of prayer is a very cauldron of iniquity, so that many say, "We cannot live there, and we do not know where to live to keep our

children out of the temptations which now surround them.” I say not that one age is worse than another, but I do say that the peculiar trials of to-day should make Christians walk very near to God; and, instead of loosening and relaxing the lines of our religious profession, let us tighten them as much as ever we can, and seek to be thoroughly Nonconformist, not conforming to the world, to be out and out Dissenters, dissenting from the ways of this ungodly generation.

Still, to help you to find out your iniquity, I will make one or two more remarks. It is likely to be *that iniquity which thou hast oftenest fallen into in thy previous life*. What has been thy sternest struggle? Against quickness of temper? Then, that is thine iniquity. Doubt and mistrust? That is thine iniquity. Has it been covetousness? Has it been slowness to forgive any who have offended you? Has it been gossiping and mixing untruth with your talk? That is your iniquity. Whatever it is which hitherto has stained thy life, that is probably the thing which will stain it again unless thou dost watch, and call in the power of the Holy Spirit for thy protection. That sin which you find yourself readily committing, which you drift into without any effort, ay, which you drift into when you are making a great many efforts not to do it, that is your iniquity. That which you have returned to after having smarted for it, that which you have vowed you would never be guilty of again, and which yet has in a moment, like the bursting forth of some hidden spring of water, carried thee away with a rush, — that is thine iniquity. Oh, how canst thou keep thyself from it unless God shall keep thee? Cry unto the Most High to enable thee to keep thyself from thine iniquity. That is thine iniquity which has overtaken thee even after thou hast prayed against it, and laboured against it, that thou hast concluded that surely thou wilt never do it again, and yet thou hast done it.

Let me tell you one thing more; *that which you do not like to hear condemned*, that which you do not like the preacher to mention, that which makes you to wriggle in your seat, and feel, “I wish he would not say that, he is coming too closely home,” that is your iniquity. And if thou canst not bear that thy wife should speak to thee about it, or that thy brother or thy sister should give thee a friendly word of advice concerning it, that which thou art most loth to hear, probably has to do with thine iniquity. We may often judge ourselves by this test. It is that which thou

art most loth to hear that thou hast most need to hear; instead of being angry with him who points it out to thee thou shouldst be willing to pay him for doing it. When you go to your doctor, and ask him to examine you, if he says, "There is something a little amiss with the heart, or with the lungs," do you knock him down? Do you get into a passion with him for telling you the truth? No, you give him his guinea, and thank him even for imparting evil news. And should we not thank those who rebuke us, and tell us of our faults? When God sendeth thee not a faithful friend, I pray him to send thee an honest enemy, who will deal straightly with thee, and let thee know where thy weakness is, that thou mayest then cry to God, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity."

II. Now, secondly, in our text there is A SPECIAL GUARD: "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

Someone may perhaps say, "I have a special temptation, but I am going to set a guard against it." Let me ask you first who you are; are you a child of God? Have you passed from death unto life? If you say, "No," I am not referring to you in this part of my subject. You must be born again, you must go by faith to Jesus Christ, and ask for cleansing in his precious blood, and renewal by the Holy Spirit; but I am now talking to the child of God, the man who has spiritual life. I speak to you, my dear brother, because you can, by God's grace, keep yourself from your iniquity. How are you to do it?

Well, first, you must *find out what it is*. You must get a clear idea of your own iniquity. Ask the Lord to search you, and try you, and know your ways. When you have found out what that iniquity is, then endeavour to *get a due sense of its foulness and guilt in the sight of God*. Ask the Lord to make thee hate most that sin to which thou art most inclined. Remember that thou art a child of God; it ill becomes thee to be friendly with any of the King's enemies. Remember that Christ has bought thee; thou belongest to him, thou shouldst not be the slave of any sin, thou must not be such if the life of God be in thee. The life of God in the soul hates sin; thou canst not take pleasure in any sin if thou art inded a regenerate man or woman. Therefore, I say to thee, seek to get a sight of the heinousness of thy particular sin and the danger which attends it, that, as thou hast an extraordinary horror of it, thou mayest set that over against thy tendency to it.

Then, *be resolved in the power of the Holy Spirit that this particular sin shall be overcome*. There is nothing like hanging it up by the neck, that very sin, I mean. Do not fire at sin indiscriminately; but, if thou hast one sin that is more to thee than another, drag it out from the crowd, and say, "Thou must die if no other does. I will hang thee up in the face of the sun." Strive against thine anger; strive against thy covetousness; strive against thine envy; strive against thine evil temper, thy malice, if that be thy fault; for there are some who are very slow to forgive. Strive against it till thou gettest thy foot upon its neck. "I cannot do it," says one. Why, the Lord has said that he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly! Surely, if you are to have the devil under your foot, you can get all sin under your feet by God's help; and you must do it. It is a part of that work that must be wrought in us to bring every thought into captivity to divine grace. You are not able to subdue the least sin apart from Christ; but, by the help of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing that can master thee. I tell thee that, if thou let any sin master thee, thou wilt be lost. If any sin should remain unconquered, thou art ruined; for this is the way of salvation, the absolute conquest of every sin through the grace of the Holy Spirit. It must be so with thee ere thou canst enter heaven, and thou art able to overcome it in the power of Jesus Christ. If thou hast an iniquity that more than another haunts thee, then keep away from all that tempts thee to it. Is there a house where thy company is much liked, but where thou art never able to come away without having fallen into sin? Keep away from that house. It is often one of the most essential things in young converts that they should quit the company in which they once sported. You may go into some company to do good; but mind that you are strong enough to resist the evil, for it does not always do for those who have but little strength to attempt to pull others out of the fire; they may be themselves pulled into it. No, come ye out from among them, be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing. You have no business to be in that place where it becomes almost necessary that you should sin; that necessity should warn you not to go there.

The true path of safety is to *pray and believe against all sin*. We conquer sin by faith in Christ. This is the axe that will cut down the upas tree, and there is no other that will do so. Believe thou in Jesus Christ the Saviour, who died for thee; and then believe in him as living again, and willing to help thee in every conflict against sin. Go thou, having Christ crucified

with thee, and ask him to crucify thy sin, and nail it up to his cross. So thou shalt be helped to overcome; but there must be care, and prayer, and watchfulness, and trust, and continual looking up to the Lord for grace. Only so can you say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

III. Thirdly, I conclude with A HAPPY RESULT.

David says, "I kept myself from mine iniquity." He does not say that he could not sin, but that he would not, and he did not. When a wicked man gets old, he may say, "I do not sin like those young people." No, because you cannot; it has been well said that there is many an old man who, if you could put young eyes in him, would look the same way as he used to do. That is not what we want; it is not the failure to commit a sin because your passions have grown colder, or your strength has left you; it is a change of heart that is wanted. "I kept myself from mine iniquity;" that is, "though it would try to tempt me, and did so, and I might have yielded to it, yet by the grace of God I would not yield."

I do pray, my brothers and sisters, that, if we live ten, twenty, thirty, or fifty more years, we may be able to say, without any boasting, but in deep humility before God, "By his great grace, by trust in Jesus, I kept myself from mine iniquity," because, if we do so, *see what a blessing it will be to us*, for it will be to us a reason for our being brought out of the trouble. If when you are in need, if when you are under temptation, God helps you to keep straight, you will come out all right at the last. What a number of stories I might tell here of young men, who were great losers at first by being godly; but they kept themselves right, and they had to thank God for it ever afterwards. I know, at this present moment, a personal friend who was a banker's clerk. On a certain day, he was told to do something which he judged to be, speaking plainly, dishonest; and he told the manager that he could not do it, whereupon he received a month's notice. It was a country bank, and he was not sent about his business at once; and he had to turn the matter over. He had a wife and children; and when he went home, it was not easy to tell the wife that the excellent situation that he held would be vacated within a short time. But he stood fast in his integrity, he said that he was sure God would bring him safely through, and he never had even the slightest thought of doing other than he had said he would do. It was within twelve months that he obtained the situation of manager for that very bank, and it belongs to him at this moment; he very

speedily became a man in a much better position than he could have expected to have obtained, simply from the fact that it had been proved that he could be trusted. It is not always so; some people have to be a long time under a cloud; but, in the long run, if thou as a child of God wilt but stand fast, God will not let thee be a loser. If he does, it shall be thy glory to lose everything sooner than tarnish thy character. Thou shalt find it a greater joy to lose all things for Christ than it would be to gain the whole world by doing anything that was wrong. If you are able to say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity," then you shall also be able to say with David, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised."

Next, if you act thus, *it will be a triumph of divine grace*. Brethren, we want to show the world what grace can do, and every member of the church ought to feel that he is put upon his behaviour to prove what the grace of God has done in him. What credit is brought to Christ by professed Christians who are so like worldlings that, if you put them under a microscope, you could not tell the difference between them? If you can do what worldlings do, you shall go at last where worldlings go. If grace does not make you to differ from them, it is not the grace of God, it is all a sham. We ought to feel that Christ's honour is in danger by our ill behaviour, and so live that we can glorify our Father who is in heaven by our good works, keeping ourselves from our iniquity.

For again, *this will be our best testimony to others*. It is well to preach as I do, with my lips; but you can all preach with your feet, and by your lives, and that is the most effective preaching. The preaching of holy lives is living preaching. The most effective ministry from a pulpit is that which is supported by godliness from the pew. God help you to do this!

And, lastly, *what a sweet peace this will give to your conscience!* Though we know we are saved by grace, hear this, ye ungodly. There is no way of salvation for you, or for us, but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ; yet when we are saved, the evidence to our own soul of that work of grace upon our nature is very sweet when we can say, "I have kept myself from mine iniquity." A well-spent life, a life that is pure, a life that has been consecrated to usefulness, a life in which there has not been a turning aside to the right hand or to the left, helps us to lie down with comfort upon our

dying bed, and bid farewell to all our dear ones and feel that we are leaving behind us the legacy of a gracious example in which we do not glory, but for which we give God the glory, and thank and praise his holy name. Begin at the cross; there is the source of your salvation. Then go, and live like the living Saviour. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake!

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

A PARADOX

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, November 4th, 1888, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“When I am weak, then am I strong.” — 2 Corinthians 12:10

The expression is paradoxical, and seems somewhat singular; yet it was the experience of the apostle Paul, a man of calm spirit, by no means fanciful, a wise man, and far removed from a fanatic. It was the experience of one who was led of the Spirit of God, and therefore it was a gracious experience: the experience of one who was a father in Israel, who could safely bid us to be imitators of him, even as he imitated the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore it was a safe experience. If we are weak, so was Paul; and if, like him, we are strong in our weakness, we shall be in the best of company. If the same things be seen in us which were wrought in the apostle of the Gentiles, we may join with him in glorying in infirmities, because the power of Christ doth rest upon us, and we may count ourselves happy that with such a saint we can cry, “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

I. Perhaps I can expound the text best if I first TURN IT THE OTHER WAY UP, and use it as a warning.

When I am strong, then am I weak. Perhaps, while thinking of the text thus turned inside out, we shall be getting light upon it to be used when we view it with the right side outwards, and see that *when we are weak, then we are strong.*

I am quite sure that some people think themselves very strong, and are not so. Their proud consciousness of fancied strength is the indication of a terrible weakness. We have among us *certain persons who think that they can do all that is needful for their own salvation* whenever they please to do so. They can perform all sorts of good works, or at least quite enough to carry them to heaven. Their first idea is that they are to be saved by their own doings; and they really expect to be so saved. They may admit that they have a few faults and flaws in their character; but these are so trifling as to be hardly worth mentioning, and God Almighty is too merciful to be very particular. Their lives have been excellent, their tempers amiable, their manners courteous, their spirit generous, and they quite believe that by keeping on at the same pace they will win the prize: if they do not, who will? The ship of their character is in fine condition; they have no leaks which the pumps cannot keep down; their sails are not rent, and they hope to sail into the haven of peace with a glorious cargo of merit, having an abundant entrance, and hearing a loud, "Well done!" Ah, my friend! that consciousness of legal strength is a mere delusion, and it will have to be taken out of you. There is no going to heaven that way — by self and the works of self. Your error is a common one, but it is fatal. I have seen many epitaphs of persons, placed by the mistaken kindness of friends upon their tombstones, which I felt sure would have been sufficient to shut them out of heaven if they had been true. These departed worthies do not appear to have been sinners at all: their virtues were superlative, their faults non-existent. Such wonderful people would appear from their epitaphs to have flown up to the gates of heaven upon the wings of their own virtues, and to have entered there without a passport of mercy, as burgesses by their own right of the New Jerusalem. I wonder how they would behave themselves in heaven, if they were really admitted there! All the rest are singing, "We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"; but these needed no washing, and so they would be likely to strike up a little song by themselves, and sing, "Our robes never needed washing; we kept them white as snow." What a discord that would create in the music of the skies! What a division of character and feeling would be found among celestials! I cannot see how there could be any harmony of sentiment amongst sinners saved by grace and righteous ones who owed nothing to mercy, nothing to the atoning sacrifice.

No, my strong and virtuous hearer, you are under a grave delusion. There is a great similarity between your talk and the talk of that religious individual who went up to the temple in our Saviour's days, and, standing before the thrice-holy God, dared to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." He was not justified that day, nor will you be. A poor tax-gatherer, despised by himself, and an off-cast from his own people, stood in the temple at the same time, and all that he dared to say was, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This unworthy sinner when to his house justified, while the other worthy person was not accepted. If you think yourselves strong enough to procure heaven by your own efforts, you are ignorantly insulting the cross of Christ, for you seem to insinuate that your virtues can avail you without Jesus. If you really mean this, there is no more venom of rebellion against God in your self-righteousness than in the outward vice of those who make no pretence to godliness. For you to put your works in the place of Jesus is a blasphemy against the Saviour's blood and righteousness. Why needed Christ to die if men could save themselves? Why need he bleed upon the cross if your merits will suffice to gain you a place among the blessed? There is a fatal weakness in the claim of that man who thinks himself strong enough to force his own passage to the throne of God; that weakness lies in the pride which insults the Crucified, the disloyalty which prefers itself to the royal Saviour.

"Perish the virtue, as it ought — abhorred,
And the fool with it who insults his Lord."

Listen to me a moment, and quit your fancied strength: you, my hearer, cannot keep the law of God, for you have already broken it. How can you preserve a crystal vase entire when you have already dashed it to atoms? You must now be saved by the merits and the strength of another, or not at all; for your own merit is out of the question, through past failure. That strength of yours, upon which you dote so much, is perfect weakness. May the Lord show you this, and make you faint at heart on that account; for then you shall be strong, with real and saving strength! Now your imaginary strength is making you really weak, and that boasted merit of

yours is shutting you out from true righteousness. He that is strong in the notion of merit is weak even to utter folly before the God of truth.

“Yes,” we hear you reply, “there is a gospel way of salvation. We know that there is, for you preach it continually. You tell us that men must repent, and believe the gospel; that they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and must both overcome sin, and follow after holiness.” Yes, I do say all that; but what do you say to it? Is it really so that you find here a ground for your own strength? Do you say, “*I feel that I can repent whenever I please, and believe in Jesus when I choose?*” Ah! then I must assure you that when you are strong in that way, you are weak. I never yet knew anybody repent who gloried in his power to repent; I never yet knew a man heart-broken for sin who boasted that he could break his own heart when and where he pleased. “What!” cries one, “surely I can believe in Jesus Christ when I please!” I have not denied that statement, have I? But I tell you that your notion of power to believe is your weakness; and I would rather by half hear you cry, with deep solemnity, “Oh, that God would give me faith! Lord, help my unbelief!” Your sense of inability to believe in Christ would be a far better token for good, in my judgment, than your present flippant talk about believing when you like. Men who are in earnest talk not so: whatever their strength may be, they find it little enough in the hour of need. I beg to assure you that I have never known a man believe in Jesus who trusted that he could so believe; for his trust in his own believing kept him from trusting to Jesus; but I have known many a poor, struggling soul lie at the cross-foot, and say, “Lord, help me to look to Jesus, and live;” and God has helped him to give that look in which there is eternal life. While he has been praying, his prayer, yes, his weeping prayer, has had in it that very look to Jesus for which he was pleading. His sense of inability to believe has made him look to Jesus for believing, and he has found it in him.

You say that you can turn your heart towards God whenever you please. I am not going into any dispute with you about your assertion, nor the doctrine, which is supposed to support you in your profession of strength; but I will say this, that your idea of having personal strength, with which to purify and renew your own heart — your idea that you can create in yourself a right spirit — your idea that you can raise yourself from your death in sin — is to me a prophecy of much evil for yourself.

where self is conspicuous, I see an omen of mischief, I see no good in this fine opinion of yourself; but if I heard you cry, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” — if I heard you say, “Lord, quicken me out of my death in sin” — if I saw you lying down before the Most High, and praying, “Turn me, and I shall be turned” — I should have a far brighter hope of you. In your weakness you would become strong; but in your present strength, I am sure I see a great weakness, which is likely to be your ruin. O dear hearts, your best friend does not lie within your own doors. Your hope for better things shines yonder at the right hand of God, where the living Saviour has all power given to him in heaven and earth. Sinner, if you grow no sweeter flowers than the dunghill of your own nature can nourish, you will die amid poisonous weeds. If you never drink of better water than the filthy well of your own heart will yield, you will perish of thirst, or of a deadly draught. Another, and a better helper than one born in your house, must come this way. Help must be laid upon one that is mighty, exalted of the Lord out of the people, and endowed with divine power and Godhead, for only such a Saviour, infinitely good and great, can save a soul so lost as yours. When you get down, down, down, into utter weakness, then you will be strong, because then you will rest upon the Lord’s salvation; but as you are strong in your thoughts of yourself, you are kept from Jesus, and are weakness itself.

So far I have spoken by way of warning to unconverted people.

I desire now to say a word to those who profess to be Christians, and, let us hope, are so; but they are, in a measure, erring in the same way as those to whom I have spoken. They are remarkably strong: at least in their own esteem they are very Samsons, although others fear that the Philistines will capture them. By this token may they know their own weakness — even by this, that they think themselves strong.

First, *many are wonderfully strong as to knowledge*. They know almost everything. If in any department they are a little short, they make up for it by knowing so much more in the other direction. If they are too narrow here, they overlap there. They are knowing men, and need no man to tell them so. They are instructed in the faith from pole to pole: they know both that which is afar off, and that which is nigh. An argument is a pleasure to them. They go into company where the eternal verities are denied, and feel a delight in taking sides. They will sit where the vital

simplicities of God's word are set up like marks for boys to throw at; and they like the amusement, for it exercises their knowing faculty, and gives them a chance of showing their mental power. They are not children, but quite able to think for themselves. They are not credulous, but amazingly clear-headed and cultured. I have noticed these fine gentlemen have been the first to deny the faith, and to fall into all manner of heresies. Do you wonder? Those who are so very sure are always the most uncertain. I could instance some that had such confidence in themselves that they would have argued with the very fiend of hell on any question, for they felt that not even Satanic craft could conquer them; but at this present moment the prince of darkness holds them in his power. They hold no controversy with the devil now, for they are very largely agreed with him in assailing the gospel of God's grace. They have gone entirely over to the denial of everything that is gracious and holy and scriptural, and the main cause of their apostasy is their own invincible self-confidence. They were so strong that they became weaker than others. O brethren, when we are very wise in our own esteem, we are bordering upon fools, even if we have not already entered into that company. When we tremblingly sit at Jesus' feet, to learn everything afresh, and fresh from him; when we shudder at anything that questions his Deity, or lowers his sacrifice; when we shut up a book and cast it from us, because we feel that it pollutes us with unbelief — then are we wise and strong. When the Word of the Lord is enough, then are we in the way of wisdom and strength. The man of one book is proverbially a terrible mon; but the man of ten thousand books, who can baffle all adversaries and foil all foes, shall soon lie wounded on the plain, if he be not slain outright. Let us take heed unto ourselves, that we fall not through being headstrong, or strong in the head, which is much the same thing.

Again, I have noticed some professedly Christian people *wonderfully strong through experience*. Their experience has been very extensive, and the knowledge it has brought them they consider to be specially profound, and, consequently, they are not afraid of temptation, for they feel that they are too wise to be entrapped. They are so experienced now, that things which young people ought not to think of, they can do with impunity — so they foolishly dream. They can go just so far, and then stop, for they are fitted with the patent brakes of prudence. They are such good mountain climbers that they can stand on the edge of a precipice, and

look over, and even hang over, without fear of their ever being giddy and falling over. Of course they would not advise other people to go quite so far as they may safely go; but then, what is temptation to other men is no temptation to them. Their vessel is so tight and trim, and they understand navigation so perfectly, that they rather like a tempest than not, just to show how well their vessel can behave in a storm. Ah me! When you next read the list of wrecks, you may expect to see the name of their ship among the castaways. Old birds may not be caught with chaff, but they can be shot with a gun. No one is out of danger, and no one is more in danger than the man who is carnally secure. Those who feel that their experience, be it what it may, only teaches them that the farther they can keep from temptation the better, these are in a better state. When experience drives us to pray with emphasis the prayer "Lead us not into temptation," then it is working aright. In the idea of strength and wisdom lurks an awfully perilous weakness; but in a sense of personal weakness dwells a real strength. If you are extremely jealous, conscientious, and watchful, many will tell you how weak you are; but you are, in reality, a strong man, because of your fear to encounter evil influences: in that fear lies one essential element of holy strength. While he that rather braves temptation, because he feels so strong, shall find, it may be to his everlasting sorrow, how great his weakness is; he that shuns the appearance of evil, because of conscious weakness, shall find therein his security and strength. Oh, let none of us, because we are getting gray, suppose that we are vulnerable to sin! Let us not dream that because we have been church-members so many years, or even because we have sustained a long and useful ministry, we are therefore beyond gun-shot of the enemy, or without necessity to seek daily strength for daily duty. My brethren, we cannot perform the smallest duty aright apart from the help of God; neither can we be secure against even the grossest sin, apart from the perpetual guard of him that keepeth Israel. If we, in our self-conceit, write ourselves down among the mightiest, and forget our entire dependence upon heavenly grace, we may be left to prove, by unhappy experience, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Let us note another point. I have known certain Christian people who thought themselves *singularly strong in the matter of wisdom and prudence*. They have been gifted with clear insight and a measure of

shrewdness, and have, therefore, felt that their judgment on most subjects was that of an umpire. Have you ever noticed that the raw material of a very grossly foolish person is a cautious individual? The cunning are the readiest dupes when craft is busy in taking its prey. So, too, a wise man is needed if there is to be exhibited the worst form of folly. If we were called upon to select a man who, as to his life as a whole, perpetrated the greatest folly, we should mention Solomon. Yet he was the wisest of man. Yes, the cream of wisdom, when curdled, makes the worst of folly. Was ever man so insanely enthusiastic in vain pursuits as this master of all knowledge? Then, brethren, whenever we feel sure of our own superior intelligence, let us suspect ourselves of weakness. Let the same fear come upon us when we feel sure about our way, so sure that we think we need not pray about it, or in any manner wait for divine direction. Beware of those matters in which you think you cannot err. Men who have been wise in great difficulties have blundered fearfully where all was simple. The Israelites thought that the men who came to them begging for a league of brotherhood could not deceive them. It must be safe to be on good terms with these interesting strangers. Why, look, their shoes are well-nigh worn from their feet, and patched and clouted to the last degree! Their clothes, which we doubt not were new when they left their distant homes, are now threadbare, and their biscuit, which they took fresh from the oven, is stale with age. It is evident, upon the face of it, that they must have come from a very remote part of the world, and therefore a treaty with them will not interfere with the divine command. There can be no need to pray about a case so clear. Thus the Gibeonites overreached them, as we also shall be overreached when we are so exceeding sure of our course. Brethren, let us not be wise as to dispense with our heavenly Counsellor and Guide. Would not that be the height of madness? It is a salutary thing to feel that your case requires you to trust the helm of your ship with the divine Pilot. It is even a blessed thing to feel that you are shut up to faith, and must by absolute trust in God throw the responsibility of your action upon him. I will give you an instance. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is placed in a peculiar position. God has commanded him to take his son Isaac, and offer him for a sacrifice. Here is a terrible puzzle. Here was enough to stagger any human mind. Surely it could not be right for a father to slay his son! How could it be wise to kill the son in whom all the promises of God were vested? The more you think of the case from a father's standpoint, the

more it will perplex you. Abraham could not make any thing out of it by his judgment, but he met it all by faith. All that he could say to Isaac was, “My son, God will provide himself a Lamb.” He was thus saying to himself, “The Lord will get me out of this difficulty.” He had no wisdom with which to conjecture how the affair would end: he had to cease from guessing, and just trust in his God. Abraham made no mistake in this. Oh that we could do the same! Observe that same Abraham when he goes down to Egypt. His wife is exceedingly beautiful, and he fears that the king of Egypt will kill him in order to obtain his wife; what will he do? I can see a great many ways in which he might have warded off that evil. He was not called upon to go to Egypt at all, if he thereby risked his wife’s honour; or, if he must go, he should have gone boldly, acknowledging his wife, and trusting both her and himself with the Lord. Instead of that, the patriarch begins by inducing Sarah to join with him in equivocation. “Say thou art my sister.” She was in some sense his sister; but it was using a word in a double sense for a deceitful purpose, and it was a pitiful thing for Abraham to do. Nor was it a prudent scheme after all: in fact it was the cause of the very trouble which it sought to prevent. Sarah would not have been taken away from Abraham at all if Pharaoh had known that she was his wife; so that the wise was snared by his own craftiness. The Lord graciously delivered him, but in that very act left a root of bitterness behind to be his future plague. Pharaoh gave to him women- servants, and I doubt not among the rest was Hagar, who became the object of sin, and the source of sorrow to the household. In the fancied strength of Abraham, by which he emulated the craft of other Orientals, he displayed his weakness; but in the other case, where no wit or wisdom could assist him, he cast himself upon the Lord, and in his weakness he behaved like the grand man that he really was. Brothers, let us confess ourselves fools, that we may be wise; for otherwise we shall fall into that other condition, of professing ourselves wise, and becoming fools. Let us ignore our wisdom, even if we have any. God alone is wise: he that trusteth either his own heart or head is a fool. Lean not to thine own understanding, but lean wholly upon the Lord; so shalt thou be established.

Further, dear friends, *we shall often find that our strength will lie in patience* — in extreme weakness which yields itself up to the will of God without the power or will to murmur. We sang in our hymn just now —

“And when it seems no other chance or change
 From grief can set me free,
 Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
 And, patient, waits on thee.”

I am sure that in reference to power, either to do or to suffer rightly, we are not strong when we compliment ourselves upon our ability; and we are strong when, under a sense of absolute inability, we depend wholly upon God. That sermon preached in the glory of our oratory turned out to be mere husks for swine; while that discourse which we delivered in weakness, with a humble hope that God would use it, proved to be royal meat for the Lord's chosen. That work which you performed in the vigour of your unquestioned talent came to nothing, while that quiet act which you washed with your tears, and perfumed with your prayers, will live and yield you sheaves. Creature strength brings forth nothing which has life in it: only the seed which the Creator puts into the hand of our weakness will produce a harvest. It is well to be nothing: it is better still to be “less than nothing.” We ought to dread a sense of capacity, for it will render us incapable; but a sense of utter incapacity apart from God is a fit preparation for being used by the Lord. “Unto them that have no might he increaseth strength.”

So it is in bearing as well as acting. If we say concerning sickness, “I shall never be impatient. I can bear it like a stoic.” What if that? You will then have done no more than many have done before you, with no great gain to themselves or to others. But if, bowing your head before the Lord, you wait his sovereign will, and say, “Lord help me. If thy left hand shall smite me, let thy right hand sustain me. I am willing to drink this bitter cup, saying, ‘Not as I will, but as thou wilt.’ Lord, help me!” — you shall bear up triumphantly, and come out of the furnace refined, to the praise and the glory of your God. When you fancy that you are strong to suffer, you will fail; but in conscious weakness you will be enabled to play the man.

I have now done with the text, as I have turned it upside down. May God bless it to any here who feel high and mighty, by causing it to put them in their proper place.

II. Now, let us take our text THE RIGHT WAY UPWARDS. “When I am weak, then am I strong.” “When” and “then” are the two pivots of the text — the hinges upon which it turns.

“When I am weak.” What does that mean? It means when the believer is *consciously weak*, when he painfully feels, and distinctly recognizes that he is weak, then he is strong. In truth, we are always weak, whether we know it or not; but when we not only believe this to be the fact, but see it to be the fact — then it is that we are strong. When it is forced home upon us, that we are less than nothing and vanity — when our very soul echoes and re-echoes that word, “Without me ye can do nothing.”

— then it is that we are strong.

When he is *growingly weak*. Yes, for he sees his own weakness more and more clearly as he advances: as he grows stronger in faith he is much more conscious of the weakness of the flesh. I talked about my weakness from this platform five-and- twenty years ago; but I stand here and tremble under it now to a far greater degree than I did in my younger and more vigorous time. I knew it three-and-thirty years ago, when I first spoke to you, but I did not know it as I know it now. I was then weak, and I owned it: but I am now weak, and groan about it almost involuntarily. Yes, and I sometimes sing because of my weakness, learning to glory in my infirmities because the power of Christ doth rest upon me. When we are growingly weak, when we become weaker and weaker, when we seem to faint into a deeper swoon than ever as to our own strength, till death is written upon every power that we once thought we had, and we feel that we can do absolutely nothing apart from the Holy Spirit, then we are strong indeed.

We are strong, too, when we feel *painfully weak*. It is well when we mourn because we are so weak, and cry out to ourselves, “My weakness, my weakness, woe unto me! When I would do good, evil is present with me. When I would rise to heaven, the body of this death detains me. I would do great things for God, but I have no might. Alas for my weakness!” At such a time we are really rising, and are bringing most glory to God. These are growing pains — agonies such as none know but the truly and growingly spiritual. A painful weakness is strength. It may seem a paradox, but it is true.

We are strong when we are *contritely weak*. When we confess that much of our weakness is our fault — a weakness which we ought to have overcome — even then we have in that weakness a real strength. The sort of weakness that makes a man say, “I cannot be any stronger, I am doing my best,” is not strength but folly; but that weakness which makes you lament your failures and deplore your shortcomings, has in it a holy stimulus and force. That weakness which makes you dissatisfied with all you are and all you do, is goading you on to better and stronger things. If you feel that even when most earnest you have not prayed as you could wish, there is evidently strength in your desires, and your desires are prayers. If after any service you pour forth showers of penitential tears because the service was imperfect, there is evidently a strong soul of obedience within you. When you can neither repent, nor believe, nor love as you wish to do, you are repenting, believing, and loving with a strength which is more true than apparent. It is the will with which we act which is the strength of the action; and when the will is so powerful that it makes us mourn because we cannot find how to perform its bidding, then are we strong according to the divine measurement of strength. Contrite weakness is spiritual strength.

When a man is *thoroughly weak* — not only partially, but altogether weak — then is he strong. When apart from the Lord Jesus, he is utter weakness, and nothing more — then it is that he is strong. Let me persuade you to make a full confession of weakness to the Lord. Say, “Lord, I cannot do what I ought to do: I cannot do what I want to do: I cannot do what I used to do: I cannot do what other people do: I cannot do what I mean to do: I cannot do what I am sure I shall do: I cannot do what I feel impelled to do; and over this sinful weakness I mourn.” Then add, “Lord, I long to serve thee perfectly, yet I cannot do it. Unless thou help me I can do nothing aright. There will be no good in my actions, my words, my feelings, or my desires, unless thou continue to fill me with thine own holy energy. Lord, help me! Lord, help me!” Brother, you are strong while you plead in that fashion. You can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you; and he will strengthen you, now that you are emptied of self. How true it is, “When I am weak, then am I strong!”

I have brought out the “when.” Now lend me your ears and hearts for just a minute, while I bring out the “then.” “*Then* am I strong.” When is that?

Why, a man is strong when he is consciously weak, because now he has reached the truth. He really is weak; and if he does not know that he is so, he is under the influence of a falsehood. Now a lie is a thing of weakness. Lying strength is all fluff and foam: a mere appearance, a mockery, a delusion. Nothing hinders from getting the reality like contentment with a mere appearance. The true heart is heartily sick of shows and shams, and it cries, "Lord, help me to get rid of these shadows! Help me to come at the truth! Help me to deal with realities!" When you are made to feel your utter weakness you are on sure ground of truth — unpleasant truth, no doubt, yet sure truth. You are now on safe ground touching fundamentals, and making sure work. What you now do will be soundly done. All the while that we keep building on a sandy made-up foundation, we are piling up that which will, in all probability, come down even faster than we put it up. While the rotten rubbish remains on the spot, you cannot do anything worth doing; but if that accumulation can be carted away, there will seem to be a great hole, but you will get down to the real bottom, and get a foundation; and then what you build will be worth putting up, because it will stand. Therefore, a man becomes strong when he is consciously weak, because he is on the truth, and is not being flattered by false hopes.

Next, he will be strong because *he will only go with a commission to support him*. He will not be eager to run without being sent. He says within himself, when he proposes a service to himself, "No, I am too weak to undertake anything of my own head." He will wait for a call. This is not the kind of man that will climb up into a pulpit, and from a dizzy brain pour out nonsense. He will not crave to lead, for he feels that he needs much help even to follow. He feels himself too weak to set up for a master in Israel. This is not the kind of man that will venture into argument with sceptics for the fun or for the glory of the thing. Oh, no; he is too weak for that. He says, "If I am called to defend the faith, I will do it in God's strength, hoping that it will be given me in the same hour what I shall speak. If I am called to preach, I will preach, and nobody shall stop me; for the Lord will be with my mouth. But, you see, until the man is conscious of his own weakness, he will run without being sent; and there is nobody so weak as that man. No one so weak as the man who has no commission from God, and no promise of help from him. Such a man will be thinking of this, and thinking of that, and running for this, that, and the other,

because he has a lot of waste energy which he wants to use somewhere or somehow. Could we once see him consciously weak we should hear him say, "Here am I, send me!" in answer to the question, "Whom shall I send?" Then he would not go a warfare at his own charges, but he would draw upon the all-sufficiency of God, and find himself equal to every emergency.

The man who is consciously weak is strong, next, because *of the holy caution that he will be sure to use*. He will be on his guard, because he does not feel able to cope with adversaries. He will ask for a convoy for his little barque, for he is aware of pirates. If this weak man has to pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, depend upon it he will carry in his hand the weapon of All-prayer, like a drawn sword. The man that has strength goes hurrying on over hedge and ditch, and soon comes into mischief; but the consciously weak pilgrim keeps to the high-road, and travels carefully; and hence he is strong. Fear is a notably good housekeeper: she may not keep a luxurious table, but she always locks the doors at night, and takes care of all under her charge. Holy caution begets prudence; and prudence, by fostering vigour, and crying for heavenly aid, becomes strength.

Moreover, when a man is weak, then is he strong, because *he is sure to pray*, and prayer is power. The man who laments his weakness is sure to cry to the strong for strength. The more his weakness presses on him, the more he will pray. While he can do without his God he will do without his God; but when his own weakness becomes utter and entire, and he is ready to perish, then he turns unto his Lord, and is made strong. The utterly weak cry out unto God as nobody else does. He is too weak to play at praying: he groans, he sighs, he weeps. In his abject weakness he prevails, as Jacob did. He wrestled all night; but now at last the angel has touched the hollow of his thigh, and made his sinew shrink, and he cannot wrestle any longer. What will he do now? He falls; and as he falls he grasps his antagonist, and holds him fast, crying, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." As much to say, "I cannot wrestle with thee, I cannot try another fall; but I can and will hold thee fast. The dead weight of my weakness makes me hold thee as an anchor holds a ship. I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

The weaker a man is in himself the stronger he is in prayer, if he makes use of his weakness as an appealing argument — “Lord, if I were strong, thou mightest leave me. Do not leave me, for I am weakness itself. I am the feeblest child in all thy family, leave me not, neither forsake me. If thou leavest any, leave not thy poor dying infant, that can hardly wail out its griefs.” Weakness, as a plea with God in prayer, becomes a source of strength.

When we are weak we are strong, again, because then *we are driven away from self to God*. All strength is in God, and it is well to come to the one solitary storehouse and source of might. There is no power apart from God. As long as you and I look to the creature, we are looking to a cracked, broken cistern, that holds no water; but when we know that it is broken, and that there is not a drop of water in it, then we hasten to the great fountain and well-head. While we rest in any measure upon self, or the creature, we are standing with one foot on the sand; but when we get the right away from human nature because we are too weak to have the least reliance upon self whatever, then we have both feet on the rock, and this is safe standing. If thou believest in the living God, and if all thine own existence is by believing, thou livest at a mighty rate. But if thou believest in God in a measure, and if, at the same time, thou trustest thyself in a measure, thou art living at a dying rate, and half the joy which is possible to thee is lost. Thou are taking in bread with one hand, and poison with the other: thou art feeding thy soul with substance and with shadow, and that makes a sorry mixture. When the shadow is clean taken away, and thou hast nothing but the substance, then art thou a strong man, fed upon substantial meat.

Last of all, dear friends, I believe that, when a man is weak, he becomes strong to a large extent, because *his weakness compels him to concentrate all his faculties*.

A sense of weakness brings out all the forces of a resolute spirit, and leads him to call in all the energy within his reach. When I have preached to you in extreme weakness, as I have often done, when I have afterwards read the sermon, I have been much more satisfied with it than I have been with others in which I felt more pleasure at the time.

God helps us most when we most need his help; and, besides that, the man himself is, by his weakness, forced to use himself right up. When a man feels himself to be rather a large vessel, he puts in the tap somewhere near the top, and only a small supply flows out to the people; but when he is, in his own feelings, like a poor little cask with only a small supply in it, he puts the tap right down at the bottom, and permits all that is in the barrel to flow forth. Many a poor, weak brother, who says all the little that he knows, give forth more instruction than the learned divine who only favours his people with a small portion of his vast stores. When a man, in serving God, spends himself to the last farthing, he will often far more enrich his hearers than the man of ten talents who uses his resources with a prudent parsimony. Dear brother, it will often be a good thing for you to feel, “Now, God helping me, I must do my very utmost at this time. I have so little ability that every faculty within me must be wide awake, and serve God at its best.” Thus your weakness will arouse you, and set you on fire, and, by the blessing of God, it will be the means of gaining you strength.

Very well, then, let us pick up our tools and go to our work rejoicing, feeling — Well, I may be weaker, or I may be stronger in myself, but my strength is in my God. If I should ever become stronger, then I must pray for a deeper sense of weakness, lest I become weak through my strength. And if I should ever become weaker than I am, then I must hope and believe that I am really becoming stronger in the Lord. Whether I am weak or strong, what matters it? He who never fails and never changes will perfect his strength in my weakness, and this is glory to me. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

A GRACIOUS DISMISSAL

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, January 11th, 1891, by

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

— Luke 7:50

The main part of my subject will be — that gracious dismissal, “Go in peace.” To her who had been so lately blest, the word “Go” sounded mournfully; for she would fain have remained through life with her pardoning Lord; but the added words “*in peace*” turned the wormwood into honey — there was now peace for her who had been so long hunted and harried by her sins. Rising from the feet she had washed with tears, she went forth to keep her future footsteps such as those of a believing, and therefore saved, woman ought to be.

We like a motto to begin the year with, and it has been useful to some spirits to choose a motto with which to enter on a new course of life. We climb the hill of enterprise, or dare the wave of trial, with an inspiring word upon our lip. To certain young men a word has come in life's early morning, wet with the dew of heaven and that word of their day-dawn has kept with them. The echoes of that life-evoking word have followed them long after it was spoken; amid strange scenes it has come to them like a voice from the unseen. It has whispered to them within the curtains of their dying bed: it has murmured consolation amid Jordan's swelling

waves. That first word of joy, and peace from Jesus with which they began the new life came to them over again just as they were melting away into the invisible land; so they began the service of the Redeemer, and so he declared that their work was finished. Perhaps that love-note will be their welcome at the very gates of heaven.

Our Lord, in the instance before us, sent a penitent away from the chill atmosphere of self-righteous cavilling, and thus relieved her of a controversy for which she was not fitted; but I see more than that in this benediction. It looks to me as if our divine Master, when he found this poor sinner so full of love to him that she washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, having by a parable explained to the Pharisee the reason for the greatness of her love, then said to her, "Go in peace" — meaning that word not only to be cheering for the necessary purpose of the moment, but to go with her, and to attend her all the rest of her life, until, when she came into the dark valley, she should fear no evil, for she would still hear that sweet voice saying, "Go in peace." What music to have heard! What music still to hear!

Now, I would to God that the word which I shall speak at this time might be honoured of the Lord to serve that sacred purpose to some here present. May it be a life-word to certain of you! May it be to others of us who have long known the Saviour a revival of our rest, and may we get such a draught of peace from Jesus that we may never thirst again! The lips of our divine Lord are a well-spring of delight; each word is a chalice brimmed with sweetness. Imbibing this, we shall go our way henceforth even to our journey's end, after the manner of the hymn which we sang just now: —

"Calm in the hour of buoyant health,
Calm in my hour of pain;
Calm in my poverty or wealth,
Calm in my loss or gain;

"Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
Soft resting on thy breast;
Soothe me with holy hymn and psalm,
And bid my spirit rest."

Oh, that our life may be as a sea of glass! May the sacred circle of our fellowship be within the golden line of the peace of God! Thou who didst bid us come to thee and rest, now bid us “go in peace.”

I am going to say a little in my opening upon *a delightful assurance* which constituted the reason why the woman went in peace: “Thy faith hath saved thee”; or, as in the forty-eighth verse, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” Upon the strength of the assurance that she was saved, she might safely go in peace. When we have talked a little upon that subject, we will then come to *a considerate precept*: the Saviour directed her, in the moment of trial, to “go in peace.” There was an assurance for her comfort, and a precept for her guidance.

I. First, then, consider A DELIGHTFUL ASSURANCE. The ground upon which the penitent woman might go in peace was that she had been saved. The Saviour assured her: “Thy faith hath saved thee.”

She was not saved otherwise than we are saved; but she received the common salvation by like precious faith. The way of salvation to her was faith in Christ: there is the same way for us, but she had what some of you, no doubt, would greatly like to have: she had *an assurance that she was saved, from the Lord’s own mouth*. I think I hear some saying, “I should go in peace, I am sure, if the Lord Jesus would but appear to me, and speak and say with his own lips, ‘Thy faith hath saved thee’.” It is natural that you should think so; it must have been rapture to receive a benediction from the mouth of our King, our Saviour. Yet, dear friends, we must not hang our confidence upon a mere circumstance. For a mere circumstance it is, whether Christ shall literally stand before you in the flesh, and say, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” or whether he shall say it to you by the infallible record of his own Word. It does not make much difference as to my faith in what my father says to me, whether I meet the venerable man in the morning in my garden, and there hear his voice, or whether I get a letter by post in his handwriting, and he says to me upon that paper just what he would have said if I had met him face to face. I do not require him always to come up the hill to my house to tell me everything that he has to say: I should think myself an idiot if I did. If I were to say, “My dear father, you have assured me of your love by letter;

but somehow, I cannot credit it unless you come and look me in the face, and take my hand, and assure me of your good will," surely, he would say to me, "My dear son, what ails you? You must be out of your mind. I never knew you to be so childish before: my handwriting has always been enough. I can hardly think you mean it when you say that you cannot credit me unless I stand manifest before your eyes, and with your ears you hear me speak." Now, what I would not do to my earthly father, I certainly would not do to my heavenly Saviour. I am perfectly satisfied myself to believe what he writes to me; and if it be so written in his Book, it seems to me to be quite as true and sure as if he had actually come from heaven, and had talked with me, or had appeared to me in the visions of the night. Is not this the reasoning of common-sense? Do you not at once agree with me?

"Well," you say, "we go with you there, dear sir; but, then *he spoke that word to her personally*. We should never have any more doubts, but should go in peace, if he said that word of assurance to us. You see, it is not merely that Jesus himself spoke, and said, 'Thy faith hath made *thee* whole,' but he looked that way; he turned towards her, and she knew that he referred to her. There was no mistaking to whom the assurance was given. There were other people in the room, but he did not say it to Simon; he did not say it to Peter; he did not say it to James and John. She knew by the look of him that he meant it for her, and for her alone, for she was the only person to go, and consequently the only one to 'go in peace.' Our Lord put it in the singular number, and said, 'Thy faith hath saved *thee*.' I want it to come home just so to me." Yes, but I think that this is a little unreasonable, too; is it not? Because if my father (to carry on my figure) were to speak to me, and to my brothers and to my sisters, and were to say, "Dear children, I have loving thoughts concerning you, and I have laid up in store for your needs," I do not think that I should say to him by-and-by, "Now, father, do you know that I did not believe you, or derive any pleasure from what you said, because you spoke to others beside myself? I did not think your statement of love could be true, because you included my brothers and my sisters. You did not use the singular, but you put it in the plural; and you spoke to all my brothers and sisters, as well as to myself; and therefore I felt that I could not take any comfort out of your tender assurances." I should be a most unreasonable kind of body if I were to talk in that way; and my father would begin to

think that his son was qualifying for a lunatic asylum. If he did not attribute it to unkindness of heart, he certainly would ascribe it to imbecility of head. Why, surely, surely, if my father says the same to each one of his children as he says to me, his words are all the more likely to be true, instead of being less worthy of belief; and therefore I derive comfort from his promises of love being put in the plural rather than in the singular. Surely, it should not be less easy to believe that God would deal graciously with me in company with thousands of others than that he should pursue a solitary plan with me as the lone object of his love. Is it not so?

“Ah, yes!” says one, “but you have not hit on it yet. I want to know that I am one that is in that plural, and I want to know that I really am one of those to whom Jesus speaks in his Word.” My anxious friend, you may know it; and you may know it most certainly. It is written, “He that believeth on him hath everlasting life.” It need never be a question whether you believe in him or not; if you trust him, that is the gist of the matter. You can readily ascertain whether you do really trust him, or do not trust him. If you do trust him, you are his, and every promise of his covenant is made to you. You have faith, and when the Lord lays it down as a general statement that faith saves — the statement is applicable to all the world, in every place, and in all time, until the present age shall end, and men shall have passed into the fixed state of retribution, where no gospel faith is preached. “Thy faith hath saved thee”: if thou hast faith at all — if thou believest that Jesus is the Christ — thou art born of God. If thou canst say to the Lord Jesus,

“All my trust on thee is stayed,
All my help from thee I bring,”

that is faith, and Jesus testifies, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Now, because the infallible Witness says this of all who have faith, I do not think you ought to doubt it. It is true you do not hear his voice, because he says it rather by the written Word than by word of mouth; but surely this does not affect your faith. We believe a true man whether he writes or speaks: indeed, if there be any choice, we prefer that which he has deliberately put upon paper; for this remains when the sound of the voice is clean gone. It

is most profitable for us that we should read our Lord's declaration over and over again, and put it in all sorts of shapes, and see how it remains evermore faithful and true. It is more assuring to you to find it in the volume of the Book than it would be if the Saviour met you tonight, and said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath saved thee." The record excels the voice. "No," say you, "I cannot see that." Well now, Peter was with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and nothing could shake Peter's conviction that he had been there in the midst of that heavenly glory; and yet, for all that, Peter says, concerning the inspired Word, "We have a more sure Word of testimony." He felt that even the memory of that vision, which he had assuredly seen, did not always yield to him so much assurance as did the abidingly inspired Word of God. You ought to feel the same. If I were conscious tonight that, at some period of my life, I had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken to me, the very spot of ground on which it occurred would be exceedingly dear and sacred to my spirit; but I am certain that when I grew depressed, when darkness rushed over my soul, as it does sometimes, I should be sure to say to myself, "You never saw anything of the kind. It was a delusion, a figment of imagination, a delirium, and nothing more." But, beloved, when I get to this Book, and see before me the sacred lines, I know that I am not deluded. There it stands, "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I am sure about that, and I am sure that I believe, and therefore I am sure that I am saved. I like to put my finger right down on the passage, and then say, "Lord, I know thou canst not lie. I have never had a question about this being thy Book. Whatever other doubts have plagued me, this has not. Thou hast so spoken it home to my soul, that I am as assured that this is thy Book as I am assured of my own existence; and, hence, thou has done better for the removal of my doubts, and for the assurance of my soul's eternal salvation, by putting thy promise in the Book, than if thou hadst thyself personally appeared to me, and spoken with thine own voice." O my hearer, the written Word is most sure! If thou believest, thou art saved as surely as thou art alive. If thou believest, heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord shall stand fast for thee. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." He has eternal life in present possession. Our Lord has put it thus: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "He that with his heart believeth, and with his

mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved.” There are no “ifs” or “buts” about these words of promise. Salvation is put as a present thing, and as an abiding thing, but in every case as a certain thing; and why should we be worried and worn about the matter? It is so, and let us take the comfort of the fact. We must either throw away this Book by beginning to talk about “degrees of inspiration” and all that foul rubbish, or else we are logically bound to be sure of our hope, and to rejoice in it. I warrant thee, O my hearer, that as long as thou standest fast by the belief that this is a sure Word of testimony, thou wilt know that thou art saved! If this Book be true, every believer in Jesus is as safe as Jesus himself. To say, “I believe, but I am afraid I am not saved,” is to say, only in a roundabout way, that you do not believe at all; for, if you believe, then you believe that God speaks the truth; and this is the testimony, that “God hath given us eternal life, and that life is in his Son.” This is the testimony of the great Father, and the testimony of the eternal Spirit; and we must not dare to doubt it. You may doubt whether you believe or not; but given that you do really and unfeignedly put your trust in the Lord Jesus, then, as effect follows cause, it is certain that the cause of faith will be followed by its sure effect — salvation. “Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.” Do not worry any longer: go in peace. Have done with questioning; end debate; go in peace. Go about your business, for the work of salvation is done. You are a saved soul: go and rejoice in finished salvation, and ask no more questions. “Wherefore criest thou unto me?” said God to Moses, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” Wherefore do you question and doubt any longer? Go forward to enjoy what God has prepared for you; and as you are saved and justified in Christ, now seek sanctification, and all the other blessings of the covenant of grace which lie before you in Christ Jesus your Lord. The promise is sure; be sure that it is so, and in perfect rest of soul enjoy the good which God provides you.

I think I have thus brought out as clearly as I can that delightful assurance which is the ground of the command, “Go in peace.”

II. We come, secondly, to hearken to A CONSIDERATE PRECEPT. Our Lord, with wise tenderness, dismissed the beloved object of his pardoning love, and bade her “Go *in peace*.” May the Holy Spirit bless this to us!

This precept divides itself into two parts. There is, first, “Go,” and then there is “Go in peace.”

There is “*go*.” Now, in “go” there are two things: to go *from* and to go *to*. *Where was she to go from?* First, she was *to go from these quibblers*. Simon and the Pharisees are as full of objections as a swarm of bees is full of stings. They say in their hearts one to another, “Who is this that forgiveth sins also?” They have even dared to question the character of the perfect One, and have hinted a suspicion of his purity for allowing such a woman to come so near him, and to wash his feet with her tears. Therefore the Saviour says to her, “Go.” This was not a happy place for a child-like love to linger in. Her soul would have been among lions. Jesus seems to say, “Do not stay to be tormented by these cavillers. Thy faith hath saved thee; go. You have gained a great blessing; go home with it. Let these people argue with each other; you have a rich prize, take it out of the reach of these pirates.”

Oftentimes, I believe that the child of God would find it to be his greatest wisdom, whenever he is in company that begins to assail his Lord, or to denounce his faith, just to go about his business, and let the scoffers have their scoffing to themselves. Some of us have thought it our miserable duty to read certain books that have been brought out against the truth, that we might be able to answer them; but it is a perilous calling. The Lord have mercy upon us when we have to go down into these sewers; for the process is not healthy!

“Oh,” says a man, “but you must prove all things!” Yes, so I will; but if one should set a joint of meat on his table, and it smelt rather high, I would cut a slice and if I put one bit of it in my mouth, and found it far gone, I should not feel it necessary to eat the whole round of beef to test its sweetness. Some people seem to think that they must read a bad book through; and they must go and hear a bad preacher often before they can be sure of his quality. Why, you can judge many teachings in five minutes! You say to yourself, “No, sir, no, no, no! this is good meat — for dogs. Let them have it, but it is not good meat for me, and I do not intend to poison myself with it.” The Saviour does not tell the woman, “Stop, now, and hear what Simon has got to say. Dear good woman, you have been washing my feet with tears and here is a highly intelligent gentleman, a Pharisee, who has a very learned prelection to deliver; give him a fair

hearing. You have to prove all things; therefore, stop and hear him. And here are more gentlemen who object to my pardoning your sins; and their objections are fetched from deep veins of thought. Listen to them, and then I will meet their questions, and quiet your mind." No; the Saviour says, "Go, go, go in peace. You have peace: do not stop till you lose it. You have your comfort and joy: refuse to be robbed of them." Why, if you were in a room, and you saw a certain number of gentlemen of a suspicious character, and you had your watch with you, you would not feel it necessary to stop and see whether they were able to extract your watch from you, but you would say to yourself, "No; I am best out of this company." We are safest out of the society of those whose great object it is to rob us of our faith. "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go home. Leave them. Go in peace."

I think that he meant, besides going away from the men, "*Go away from the publicity into which you have unwillingly stepped.*" If our Saviour had been like some excellent people of the present day, he would have said, "Stand before all these men, and tell your experience. I shall require you to be at half-a-dozen meetings this week, and you must speak at every one of them." A splendid woman, was she not, who washed the Saviour's feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head? She might have exhibited her eyes and her hair, and told their gracious story. Who can tell but several would have been impressed by the narrative? The Saviour said to the woman — so excitable, for she was all that, as well as grateful — "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." As much as to say, "There are certain of your own sex that you can speak to. You will find some poor fallen woman to whom you can quietly tell of my pardoning grace. But yours is a case in which the very beauty of your character will lie in the quietude of your future life. 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' That is enough for thee. Thou hast come upon the stage of action by that splendid act of thy love; but do not acquire the habit of winning publicity. Do not aspire to display thyself in a bold and heroic attitude, but go in peace." He almost seems to say, "Subside now into thy family. Take thy place with the rest of thy sisters. Adorn by thy future purity my doctrine, and let all men see what a change has been wrought in thee; for, mayhap, that very weakness of thine, which made thee what thou wast as a sinner, may put thee in danger even as a saint. Therefore I do not ask thee to tarry here, and join

my disciples, and follow me publicly through the streets, but thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.”

I think that the Master taught a great deal of wisdom here, which some of those who are leaders in the church of God would do well to copy. Yea, I think that I shall go a little further, and say, that I think *the Saviour there and then dismissed her from that high ministry which, for once in her life, she had carried out*. She washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. It was the action of a love which had risen to a passion. It was an action such as shall be told for a memorial of her everywhere; and we may well imitate her penitence, and her heroic courage, as well as her love to Christ. But, at the same time, we cannot always be doing heroic actions: life is mainly made up of common deeds. It would not be possible to be always washing feet with tears, nor to be always unbraiding tresses to use them as a towel. The difficulty with some people is that they are always wanting to practice the sublime. Alas! they often fail by just one step, and become ridiculous. They are always straining after effect; and, hearing of what has been done once, by one choice person, they must do it themselves, and they must keep on doing it. O my sister! there may come a time when you will have to speak for Christ, and speak openly before many; but tomorrow you had better go home, and see to the children, and make home happy for your husband. You will glorify Christ by darning stockings, and mending the socks of the little ones, quite as surely as by washing his feet with tears. You make a great mistake if you have not a piety which will take you into domestic life — which will help you to make the common drudgery of life a divine service. We want men that can serve God with the axe and plane, or behind a counter, or by driving a quill. These are the men we want; but there are many that crave to vault at once into a conspicuous place, and perform an astounding deed. Having done it once, they become unsettled all the rest of their lives; and do not seem as if they ever could take to plainly keeping the ten commandments, and walking in the steps of Jesus. I wish that those who must flash and blaze would hear the Lord Jesus say to them, “Go in peace.” I mean any of you who really did distinguish yourselves on one occasion, and deserved much praise from your Christian friends. I fear lest you should pine for unusual and even undesirable forms of service and become useless in the ordinary course of life. Now, do not be spoiled for life by having been allowed in one unusual deed, but hear the Master say,

“Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace. Serve me in the daily avocations of life, and bring glory to my name at home. Go from the strain of publicity to the gentler pressures of family duty.”

Do you not think that he even meant that she was now to cease *from that singular fellowship with him that she had enjoyed*? She had been very close to him; but she was, perhaps, never to be quite so near to him again. In spirit she should be; but certainly not physically. It happens that those who take to the contemplative life — and there is no life higher than that — are apt to think that they must forget the practical life. But it must not be so. We must do that which the Master bids us do, as well as sit at his feet. I am tempted to tell a story which most of you must know concerning the famous man of God, who, in his cell, thought he saw the Lord Jesus, and under that persuasion he worshipped with rapt delight. But just then the bell at the convent-gate rang, and it was his turn to stand at the door, and deal out bread to the hungry. There was a little battle in his mind as to which he should do — tarry with his Lord, or go to hand out bread to the poor mendicants. At last, he felt that he must do his duty even at the cost of the highest spiritual bliss. He went and distributed the bread, and when he came back, to his great delight, the vision was still there, and a voice said to him, “If thou hadst stayed, I would have gone; but as thou hast gone, I have therefore stayed still to commune with thee.” The path of duty must be followed, and no spiritual enjoyment can excuse us from it. Never offer one duty to God stained with the blood of another. Balance your duties, and let not one press out another. “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” Do not think that thou needest to be all day long at thy Bible, or all the evening at thy prayer. There is a time for everything. Let every holy work have its place, that thy life may be a fair mosaic of brilliant colours, all set according to the divine pattern, to make up a perfect character. “Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace, and do the next thing, and the next, without weariness.”

That leads me to speak of *what she was to go to*. It seems to me that the Saviour said, “Now *go home*. You have been a fallen woman: home is the place for you. Go home to your mother and father, or other relatives. Seek a home. Be domesticated. *Attend to your own work*. Whatever your place is, go to it. Leaving daily duty was the source of your temptation; return to walks of usefulness, and habits of order, and this will be your safety.

You will be less likely to be led away if you have to work to occupy head, and heart, and hands.”

Did he not mean, “*Go now to your ordinary life-trial*”? Do you think yourself a very peculiar person — a sort of saint, that has to float in the air, or live upon roses? Do not fancy such a thing. I have heard of the Chinese, that they sell shoes with which you can walk on the clouds; and I believe that some people must have bought a pair of these remarkable articles; for their lives are spent in cloudland, walking as in a dream, upon high stilts of fond imaginations. Do not think great things of yourself. You are but a commonplace man or woman. Do such duty as your fellow-Christians do, and do not think yourself a superior person. The worst people in the world to work with are superior people. Those are of no importance who think they are of great importance. Poor creature! it is not the grace of God which turns your brain, but your own silly conceit.

Go forth to your further service: “Go in peace. There are some to whom you can tell of my love. Oh, how you will tell it! You that have washed my feet with your tears, go and shower those tears over fallen ones like yourself. Go, use those eyes, that you may look my love right into their hearts as you are speaking to them. Go all your life in peace, and do for me all that I shall put in your way to do for me.” That is what I think our Lord meant. Brethren, do not think of sitting here to enjoy yourselves; but go off, and glorify your Redeemer’s name. Go!

But then here is the point of it: he said “*Go in peace.*” O my brethren, I desire that all of us who love the Lord may go henceforth all the rest of our life journey in peace. May pardoning love put us at peace concerning all our sins! O pardoned one, thou lovest much, for thou hast had much forgiven; let thy thoughts all run to love, and none to fear. Fret not about the past — the dark, dishonorable past. The hand that was pierced has blotted it all out. The great Lord has frankly forgiven thee all thy debt. Let not that disturb thee any longer. Go in peace. What a rest it is to be rid of the burden of sin, and to know of a certainty, from the teaching of God’s own word, that your sins are forgiven you! This is peace which passeth all understanding.

Our Lord meant, next, “*Go in peace*” in reference to all the criticisms of all these people who have looked at you. Do not mind them. Do not trouble

about them. What have they to do with you? It is enough for a servant if his master accepts him: he need not mind what others have to say about his service. Thy faith hath saved thee. Forget all the unkind things they have said, and do not trouble thy heart about the cruel speeches they may yet make. Go in peace, and be under no alarm as to upbraiding tongues.

And then I think he meant, “*Go in peace about what thou hast done.*” I know the need of a word like that. I have preached the gospel: I have thrown my whole soul into it; and after it is all over, I have felt bound to chide myself that I did not do much better as to style, or spirit, or length, or some other matter. Oh, but if the Master accepts it, one may go in peace about it! This woman had done a very extraordinary thing in washing Christ’s feet with tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head; and when she got away, she might have said to herself, “I wonder that I was so bold. Was I not immodestly conspicuous? How could I have done it? How must I have looked when I was bathing his feet? For me, too — such a sinner as I am — for me to have done it to the blessed and holy One! I fear he must have felt vexed at my rudeness!” Have you not sometimes done a brave thing for Christ, and then afterwards felt just like that? “I was a bold minx,” say you, “after all, to push myself so forward.” The good young man, who has just preached for the first time, says, “Well, I got through it this time, but I will never attempt it again, for I am sure that I am not fit for such holy work.” So the Master says to this woman, “Go in peace. I have accepted thee and thy loving service. Do not trouble about what thou hast done. It is all sweet to me, and has a rich perfume of thy great love. Never fret about what you have done. You have done the right thing. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.” I want us to have just that kind of peace — peace about what we have done for our Lord, even as we have peace about sin forgiven, and peace about human criticisms.

“Go in peace.” Oh, to possess, from this time forth, a holy quiet! We are so apt to grow fretful. I know some good brethren who have a swollen vein of suspicion about them, that bleeds every now and then, and pains them greatly, and alarms other people. I know some sisters: they are very good, but unreasonably fearful. They say that they are “nervous.” Perhaps that is the fact; and so I will say no more. But, oh, that we could get them cured of this disease of the nerves! I would they could be quieted! I admire the

members of the Society of Friends for this virtue beyond almost any other which they exhibit: they seem to be so steady, self-contained, and equable. They are a little slow, perhaps; but then they are very sure, and firm, and steadfast, and calm. We are some of us too much in a hurry to go fast. If we were a little slower, we should be quicker. If we left our affairs more entirely with God, our peace might be like a river.

Yes, I would to God, dear friends, that we might feel henceforth a constant joy. Why not? Nothing ought to trouble us, for we know that all things work together for good. If we live by faith, nothing can trouble us; for between here and heaven we shall keep company with thee, thou Blessed One! And if the way thou takest be rough, the fact of thy being with us shall make it smooth to us. We will travel merrily with this as our march-music — “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

Still, to come back to where I began, I dare say that the good woman thought that she would like to speak a word for the Lord. When they said that he could not forgive sin, would not she have liked to say, “But he did forgive my sin, and he changed my nature. How dare you speak thus?” But the Saviour said, “Go.” She was not called to contend. Thank God every child of God is not called to fight with the adversary: those of us who are men of war from our youth up take no pleasure in strife. We wish that, like this holy woman, we could be exempt from this warfare. She might well rejoice in her escape from the sacred conscription. Many a cuff and blow she thus avoided; and as her Captain sent her off the field, she might go home right happily.

She might have lost the blessed frame of mind in which she then was, and this would have been a real injury to her. She was sweetly wrapped up in love, and there her Lord would have her abide. He seems to say, “You are too precious to be battered and bruised in battle. Go — go in peace. Dear soul, you are so full of love to me that I do not want you to be worried with fighting, and contending, and controverting. Go in peace.” She would have done no good, I dare say, if she had ventured into a fray for which she was so unfitted. If she had spoken, she would have said something which the cruel Pharisees would have turned into a jest. So he said to her, “Go in peace.” Why should her feebleness give them an occasion for unholy triumph? All true hearts are not fit for fight. Besides, she had her Lord to be her Advocate, and there was no need for her to speak. Therefore he

said, "I can manage them without your presence. Go in peace." When we may believingly leave a difficulty with our Lord, it is faith's duty to go home quietly. No doubt, by going in peace, she would be doing greater service than she would by using her tongue upon these ungodly men. A quiet, happy life is often the noblest witness that we can bear for Christ. Therefore I say to everyone who loves the Lord, there are times when he will say to us, "Do not enter into any of this conflict, and turmoil, and muddle. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

The last word I have to say is this. There are many poor souls who talk about coming to Christ, who are not yet saved; and they are always hearing about faith, and thinking of it, and yet they never do, in very truth, believe. Now, do not hear nor debate any more about faith, but *believe*. Trust Jesus Christ, and think no more about your own trusting. Thou shalt think of it as a thing done, I mean, but not as a thing to be done. God help thee now to believe in Jesus, and so pass over the bridge of belief to the golden shore of Jesus himself!

Well, but I notice some say that they believe, but it is not believing, because if it were believing, they would "go in peace." A person comes to the bank with a cheque. He believes it to be honestly his, and the signature to be correct. He puts it down on the counter, and the clerk puts out the money. But see! The man does not take it! He stands and loafs about; and the clerk looks at him, and wonders what he is at. At last, when the person has been there long enough to wear the good man's patience out, the clerk says, "Did you bring that cheque to have the money?" "Yes, I handed it in." "Well, then, why do you not take the money, and go about your business?" If he is a sensible man, he delays no longer; nay, he would not have delayed so long. He takes the money, and departs in peace. Now, dear soul, if thou hast a promise from God — "He that believeth is not condemned," or "he that believeth hath everlasting life" — dost thou believe? Then take the blessing, and go about thy business. Do not keep on saying, "Perhaps it is so," and "Perhaps it is not so." Do you believe that God speaks the truth? If so, then take the promised blessing and enjoy it; for thou art a saved man. "But I have been going to a place of worship for years, and I have been believing in a sort of a way; but I have never dared to say that I was saved." Then you are acting the part of an unbeliever. If you do not know that you are saved, how dare you go to sleep tonight?

How should a man dare to eat his meals, and go about his business, and yet say, "I do not know whether I am saved or not?" Thou mayest know it, and thou oughtest to know it. If you believe, you are saved: if you doubt that fact, you are rather an unbeliever than a believer. Take up your money, and go home. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Trust Jesus! Thy faith has saved thee. Go in peace.

The Lord help you truly to believe, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Romans
8:15-39.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 719, 726, 702.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

THE COVENANT PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

A Sermon

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 12th, 1891, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And I will put my spirit within you.”

— Ezekiel 36:27

No preface is needed; and the largeness of our subject forbids our wasting time in beating about the bush. I shall try to do two things this morning: first, I would *commend the text*; and secondly, I would in some measure *expound the text*.

I. First, as for THE COMMENDATION OF THE TEXT, the tongues of men and of angels might fail. To call it a golden sentence would be much too commonplace: to liken it to a pearl of great price would be too poor a comparison. We cannot feel, much less speak, too much in praise of the great God who has put this clause into the covenant of His grace. In that covenant every sentence is more precious than heaven and earth; and this line is not the least among His choice words of promise: “I will put my spirit within you.”

I would begin by saying that it is *a gracious word*. It was spoken to a graceless people, to a people who had followed “their own way,” and refused the way of God; a people who had already provoked something more than ordinary anger in the Judge of all the earth; for He Himself said (verse 18), “I poured my fury upon them.” These people, even under chastisement, caused the holy name of God to be profaned among the

heathen, whither they went. They had been highly favoured, but they abused their privileges, and behaved worse than those who never knew the Lord. They sinned wantonly, wilfully, wickedly, proudly and presumptuously; and by this they greatly provoked the Lord. Yet to them He made such a promise as this — “I will put my spirit within you.” Surely, where sin abounded grace did much more abound.

Clearly this is a word of grace, for the law saith nothing of this kind. Turn to the law of Moses, and see if there be any word spoken therein concerning the putting of the Spirit within men to cause them to walk in God’s statutes. The law proclaims the statutes; but the gospel alone promises the spirit by which the statutes will be obeyed. The law commands and makes us know what God requires of us; but the gospel goes further, and inclines us to obey the will of the Lord, and enables us practically to walk in His ways. Under the dominion of grace the Lord worketh in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

So great a boon as this could never come to any man by merit. A man might so act as to deserve a reward of a certain kind, in measure suited to His commendable action; but the Holy Spirit can never be the wage of human service: the idea verges upon blasphemy. Can any man deserve that Christ should die for him? Who would dream of such a thing? Can any man deserve that the Holy Ghost should dwell in him, and work holiness in him? The greatness of the blessing lifts it high above the range of merit, and we see that if the Holy Ghost be bestowed, it must be by an act of divine grace — grace infinite in bounty, exceeding all that we could have imagined. “Sovereign grace o’er sin abounding” is here seen in clearest light. “I will put my spirit within you” is a promise which drops with graces as the honeycomb with honey. Listen to the divine music which pours from this word of love. I hear the soft melody of grace, grace, grace, and nothing else but grace. Glory be to God, who gives to sinners the indwelling of His Spirit.

Note, next, that *it is a divine word*: “I will put my spirit within you.” Who but the Lord could speak after this fashion? Can one man put the Spirit of God within another? Could all the church combined breathe the Spirit of God into a single sinner’s heart? To put any good thing into the deceitful heart of man is a great achievement; but to put the Spirit of God into the heart, truly this is the finger of God. Nay, here I may say, the Lord has

made bare His arm, and displayed the fulness of His mighty power. To put the Spirit of God into our nature is a work peculiar to the Godhead, and to do this within the nature of a free agent, such as man, is marvellous. Who but Jehovah, the God of Israel, can speak after this royal style, and, beyond all dispute, declare, “I will put my spirit within you?” Men must always surround their resolves with conditions and uncertainties; but since omnipotence is at the back of every promise of God, He speaks like a king; yea, in a style which is only fit for the eternal God. He purposes and promises, and He as surely performs. Sure, then, is this sacred saying, “I will put my spirit within you.” Sure, because divine. O sinner, if we poor creatures had the saving of you, we should break down in the attempt; but, behold the Lord Himself comes on the scene, and the work is done! All the difficulties are removed by this one sentence, “I will put my spirit within you.” We have wrought with our spirit, we have wept over you, ‘and we have entreated you; but we have failed. Lo, there cometh One into the matter who will not fail, with whom nothing is impossible; and He begins His work by saying, “I will put my spirit within you.” The word is of grace and of God; regard it, then, as a pledge from the God of grace.

To me there is much charm in the further thought that *this is an individual and personal word*. The Lord means, “I will put my spirit within you”: that is to say, within *you*, as individuals. “I will put my spirit within you” one by one. This must be so since the connection requires it. We read in verse 26, “A new heart also will I give you.” Now, a new heart can only be given to one person. Each man needs a heart of his own, and each man must have a new heart for himself. “And a new spirit will I put within you.” Within each one this must be done. “And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” — these are all personal, individual operations of grace. God deals with men one by one in the solemn matters of eternity, sin, and salvation. We are born one by one, and we die one by one: even so we must be born again one by one, and each one for himself must receive the Spirit of God. Without this a man has nothing. He cannot be caused to walk in God’s statutes except by the infusion of grace into him as an individual. I think I see among my hearers a lone man, or woman, who feels himself, or herself, to be all alone in the world, and therefore hopeless. You can believe that God will do great things for a nation, but how shall the solitary be thought of? You are an odd person, one that could not be written down in any list; peculiar

sinner, with constitutional tendencies all your own. Thus saith God, “I will put my spirit within you”; within *your* heart — even *yours*. My dear hearers, you who have long been seeking salvation, but have not known the power of the Spirit — this is what you need. You have been striving in the energy of the flesh, but you have not understood where your true strength lieth. God saith to you, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord”; and again, “I will put my spirit within you.” Oh, that this word might be spoken of the Lord to that young man who is ready to despair; to that sorrowful woman who has been looking into herself for power to pray and believe! You are without strength or hope in and of yourself; but this meets your case in all points. “I will put my spirit within you” — within you as an individual. Enquire of the Lord for it. Lift up your heart in prayer to God, and ask Him to pour upon you the Spirit of grace and of supplications. Plead with the Lord, saying, “Let thy good Spirit lead me. Even me.” Cry, “Pass me not, my gracious Father; but in me fulfil this wondrous word of thine, ‘I will put my spirit within you.’”

Note, next, that *this is a separating word*. I do not know whether you will see this readily; but it must be so: this word separates a man from his fellows. Men by nature are of another spirit from that of God, and they are under subjection to that evil spirit, the Prince of the power of the air. When the Lord comes to gather out His own, fetching them out from among the heathen, He effects the separation by doing according to this word, “I will put my spirit within you.” This done, the individual becomes a new man. Those who have the Spirit are not of the world, nor like the world; and they soon have to come out from among the ungodly, and to be separate; for difference of nature creates conflict. God’s Spirit will not dwell with the evil spirit: you cannot have fellowship with Christ and with Belial; with the kingdom’ of heaven and with this world. I wish that the people of God would again wake up to the truth that to gather out a people from among men is the great purpose of the present dispensation. It is still true, as James said at the Jerusalem Council, “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.” We are not to remain clinging to the old wreck with the expectation that we shall pump the water out of her and get her safe into port. No; the cry is very different — “Take to the lifeboat! Take to the lifeboat!” You are to quit the wreck, and then you are to carry away from the sinking mass that which God will save. You must be separate

from the old wreck, lest it suck you down to sure destruction. Your only hope of doing good to the world is by yourselves being “not of the world,” even as Christ was not of the world. For you to go down to the world’s level will neither be good for it nor for you. That which happened in the days of Noah will be repeated; for when the sons of God entered into alliance with the daughters of men, and there was a league between the two races, the Lord could not endure the evil mixture, but drew up the sluices of the lower deep and swept the earth with a destroying flood. Surely, in that last day of destruction, when the world is overwhelmed with fire, it will be because the church of God shall have degenerated, and the distinctions between the righteous and the wicked shall have been broken down. The Spirit of God, wherever He comes, doth speedily make and reveal the difference between Israel and Egypt; and in proportion as His active energy is felt, there will be an ever-widening gulf between those who are led of the Spirit and those who are under the dominion of the flesh. The possession of the Spirit will make you, my hearer, quite another sort of man from what you now are, and then you will be actuated by motives which the world will not appreciate; for the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Then you will act, and speak, and think, and feel in such a way, that this evil world will misunderstand and condemn you. Since the carnal mind knoweth not the things that are of God — for those things are spiritually discerned — it will not approve your objects and designs. Do not expect it to be your friend. The spirit which makes you to be the seed of the woman is not the spirit of the world. The seed of the serpent will hiss at you, and bruise your heel. Your Master said, “Because ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you.” It is a separating word this. Has it separated you? Has the Holy Spirit called you alone and blessed you? Do you differ from your old companions? Have you a life they do not understand? If not, may God in mercy put into you that most heavenly deposit, of which He speaks in our text: “I will put my spirit within you”!

But now notice, *that it is a very uniting word*. It separates from the world, but it joins to God. Note how it runs: “I will put *my* Spirit within *you*.” It is not merely *a* spirit, or *the* spirit, but *my* spirit. Now when God’s own Spirit comes to reside within our mortal bodies, how near akin we are to the Most High! “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” Does not this make a man sublime? Have you never stood in awe

of your own selves, O ye believers? Have you enough regarded even this poor body, as being sanctified and dedicated, and elevated into a sacred condition, by being set apart to be the temple of the Holy Ghost? Thus are we brought into the closest union with God that we can well conceive of. Thus is the Lord our light and our life; while our spirit is subordinated to the divine Spirit. “I will put my spirit within you” — then God Himself dwelleth in you. The Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead is in you. With Christ in God your life is hid, and the Spirit seals you, anoints you, and abides in you. By the Spirit we have access to the Father; by the Spirit we perceive our adoption, and learn to cry, “Abba, Father”; by the Spirit we are made partakers of the divine nature, and have communion with the thrice holy Lord.

I cannot help adding here that *it is a very condescending word* — “I will put my spirit within you.” Is it really so, that the Spirit of God who displays the power and energetic force of God, by whom God’s Word is carried into effect — that the Spirit who of old moved upon the face of the waters, and brought order and life from chaos and death — can it be so that He will deign to sojourn in men? God in our nature is a very wonderful conception! God in the babe at Bethlehem, God in the carpenter of Nazareth, God in the “man of sorrows,” God in the Crucified, God in Him who was buried in the tomb — this is all marvellous. The incarnation is an infinite mystery of love; but we believe it. Yet, if it were possible to compare one illimitable wonder with another, I should say that God’s dwelling in His people and that repeated ten thousand times over, is more marvellous. That the Holy Ghost should dwell in millions of redeemed men and women, is a miracle not surpassed by that of our Lord’s espousal of human nature. For our Lord’s body was perfectly pure, and the Godhead, while it dwells with His holy manhood, does at least dwell with a perfect and sinless nature; but the Holy Spirit bows Himself to dwell in sinful men; to dwell in men who, after their conversion, still find the flesh warring against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; men who are not perfect, though they strive to be so; men who have to lament their shortcomings, and even to confess with shame a measure of unbelief. “I will put my spirit within you” means the abiding of the Holy Spirit in our imperfect nature. Wonder of wonders! Yet is it as surely a fact as it is a wonder. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the Spirit of God, for “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” You could not

bear the suspicion that you are not His; and therefore, as surely as you are Christ's, you have His Spirit abiding in you. The Saviour has gone away on purpose that the Comforter might be given to dwell in you, and He does dwell in you. Is it not so? If it be so, admire this condescending God, and worship and praise His name. Sweetly submit to His rule in all things. Grieve not the Spirit of God. Watch carefully that nothing comes within you that may defile the temple of God. Let the faintest monition of the Holy Spirit be law to you. It was a holy mystery that the presence of the Lord was specially within the veil of the Tabernacle, and that the Lord God spake by Urim and Thummim to His people; it is an equally sacred marvel that now the Holy Ghost dwells in our spirits and abides within our nature and speaks to us whatsoever He hears of the Father. By divine impressions which the opened ear can apprehend, and the tender heart can receive, He speaketh still. God grant us to know His still small voice so as to listen to it with reverent humility and loving joy: then shall we know the meaning of these words, "I will put my spirit within you."

Nor have I yet done with commending my text, for I must not fail to remind you that *it is a very spiritual word*. "I will put my spirit within you" has nothing to do with our wearing a peculiar garb — that would be a matter of little worth. It has nothing to do with affectations of speech — those might readily become a deceptive peculiarity. Our text has nothing to do with outward rites and ceremonies; but goes much further and deeper. It is an instructive symbol when the Lord teaches us our death with Christ by burial in baptism: it is to our great profit that He ordains bread and wine to be tokens of our communion in the body and blood of His dear Son; but these are only outward things, and if they are unattended with the Holy Spirit they fail of their design. There is something infinitely greater in this promise — "I will put my spirit within you." I cannot give you the whole force of the Hebrew, as to the words "within you," unless I paraphrase them a little, and read "I will put my spirit in the midst of you." The sacred deposit is put deep down in our life's secret place. God puts His Spirit not upon the surface of the man, but into the centre of his being. The promise means — "I will put my spirit in your bowels, in your hearts, in the very soul of you." This is an intensely spiritual matter, without admixturing of anything material and visible. It is spiritual, you see, because it is the Spirit that is given; and He is given internally within our spirit. It is true the Spirit operates upon the external life, but it is

through the secret and internal life, and of that inward operation our text speaks. This is what we so greatly require. Do you know what it is to attend a service and hear God's truth faithfully preached, and yet you are forced to say, "Somehow or other it did not enter into me; I did not feel the unction and taste the savor of it"? "I will put my spirit within you," is what you need. Do you not read your Bibles, and even pray, and do not both devotional exercises become too much external acts? "I will put my spirit *within* you" meets this evil. The good Spirit fires your heart; he penetrates your mind; he saturates your soul; he touches the secret and vital springs of your existence. Blessed Word! I love my text. It love it better than I can speak of it.

Observe once more that *this Word is a very effectual one*. "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." The Spirit is operative — first upon the inner life, in causing you to love the law of the Lord; and then it moves you openly to keep His statutes concerning Himself, and His judgments between you and your fellow-men. Obedience, if a man should be flogged to it, would be of little worth; but obedience springing out of a life within, this is a priceless breastplate of jewels. If you have a lantern, you cannot make it shine by polishing the glass outside, you must put a candle within it: and this is what God does, He puts the light of the Spirit within us, and then our light shines. He puts His Spirit so deep down into the heart, that the whole nature feels it: it works upward, like a spring from the bottom of a well. It is, moreover, so deeply implanted that there is no removing it. If it were in the memory, you might forget it; if it were in the intellect, you might err in it; but "within you" it touches the whole man, and has dominion over you without fear of failure. When the very kernel of your nature is quickened into holiness, practical godliness is effectually secured. Blessed is he who knows by experience our Lord's words — "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

If I should fail in expounding the text, I hope I have so fully commended it to you, that you will turn it over and meditate upon it yourselves, and so get a home-born exposition of it. The key of the text is within its own self; for if the Lord gives you the Spirit, you will then understand his words — "I will put my spirit within you."

II. But now I must work upon THE EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT. I trust the Holy Spirit will aid me therein. Let me show you how the good Spirit manifests the fact that He dwells in men. I have to be very brief on a theme that might require a great length of time; and can only mention a part of His ways and workings.

One of the first effects of the Spirit of God being put within us is *quickenings*. We are dead by nature to all heavenly and spiritual things; but when the Spirit of God comes, then we begin to live. The man visited of the Spirit begins to feel; the terrors of God make him tremble, the love of Christ makes him weep. He begins to fear, and he begins to hope: a great deal of the first and a very little of the second, it may be. He learns spiritually to sorrow: he is grieved that he has sinned, and that he cannot cease from sinning. He begins to desire that which once he despised: he specially desires to find the way of pardon, and reconciliation with God. Ah, dear hearers! I cannot make you feel, I cannot make you sorrow for sin, I cannot make you desire eternal life; but it is all done as soon as this is fulfilled by the Lord, "I will put my spirit within you." The quickening Spirit brings life to the dead in trespasses and sins.

This life of the Spirit shows itself by causing the man to pray. The cry is the distinctive mark of the living child. He begins to cry in broken accents, "God be merciful to me." At the same time that he pleads, he feels the soft relentings of repentance. He has a new mind towards sin, and he grieves that he should have grieved his God. With this comes faith; perhaps feeble and trembling, only a touch of the hem of the Saviour's robe; but still Jesus is his only hope and his sole trust. To Him he looks for pardon and salvation. He dares to believe that Christ can save even him. Then has life come into the soul when trust in Jesus spring up in the heart.

Remember, dear friends, that as the Holy Spirit gives quickening at the first, so He must revive and strengthen it. Whenever you become dull and faint, cry for the Holy Spirit. Whenever you cannot feel in devotion as you wish to feel, and are unable to rise to any heights of communion with God, plead my text in faith, and beg the Lord to do as He hath said, namely, "I will put my spirit within you." Go to God with this covenant clause, even if you have to confess, "Lord, I am like a log, I am a helpless lump of weakness. Unless thou come and quicken me I cannot live to Thee." Plead importunately the promise, "I will put my spirit within you." All the life

of the flesh will gender corruption; all the energy that comes of mere excitement will die down into the black ashes of disappointment; the Holy Ghost alone is the life of the regenerated heart. Have you the Spirit? and if you have Him within you, have you only a small measure of His life, and do you wish for more? Then go still where you went at first. There is only one river of the water of life: draw from its floods. You will be lively enough, and bright enough, and strong enough, and happy enough when the Holy Spirit is mighty within your soul.

When the Holy Spirit enters, after quickening He gives *enlightening*. We cannot make men see the truth, they are so blind; but when the Lord puts His Spirit within them their eyes are opened. At first they may see rather hazily; but still they do see. As the light increases, and the eye is strengthened, they see more and more clearly. What a mercy it is to see Christ, to look unto Him, and so to be lightened! By the Spirit, souls see things in their reality: they see the actual truth of them, and perceive that they are facts. The Spirit of God illuminates every believer, so that he sees still more marvellous things out of God's law; but this never happens unless the Spirit opens his eyes. The apostle speaks of being brought "out of darkness into His marvellous light"; and it is a marvellous light, indeed, to come to the blind and dead. Marvellous because it reveals truth with clearness. It reveals marvellous things in a marvellous way. If hills and mountains, if rocks and stones were suddenly to be full of eyes, it would be a strange thing in the earth, but not more marvellous than for you and me by the illumination of the Holy Spirit to see spiritual things. When you cannot make people see the truth, do not grow angry with them, but cry, "Lord, put thy spirit within them." When you get into a puzzle over the Word of the Lord, do not give up in despair, but believingly cry, "Lord, put thy Spirit within me." Here lies the only true light of the soul. Depend upon it, all that you can see by any light except the Spirit of God you do not spiritually see. If you only see intellectually, or rationally, you do not see to salvation. Unless intellect and reason have received heavenly light, you may see, and yet not see; even as Israel of old. Indeed, your boasted clear sight may aggravate your ruin, like that of the Pharisees, of whom our Lord said, "But now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." O Lord, grant us the Spirit within, for our soul's illumination!

The Spirit also works *conviction*. Conviction is more forcible than illumination: it is the setting of a truth before the eye of the soul, so as to make it powerful upon the conscience. I speak to many here who know what conviction means; still I will explain it from my own experience. I knew what sin meant by my reading, and yet I never knew sin in its heinousness and horror, till I found myself bitten by it as by a fiery serpent, and felt its poison boiling in my veins. When the Holy Ghost made sin to appear sin, then was I overwhelmed with the sight, and I would fain have fled from myself to escape the intolerable vision. A naked sin stripped of all excuse, and set in the light of truth, is a worse sight than to see the devil himself. When I saw sin as an offence against a just and holy God, committed by such a proud and yet insignificant creature as myself, then was I alarmed. Sirs, did you ever see and feel yourselves to be sinners? "Oh, yes," you say, "we are sinners." O sir, do you mean it? Do you know what it means? Many of you are no more sinners in your own estimation than you are Hottentots. The beggar who exhibits a sham sore knows not disease; if he did he would have enough of it without pretences. To kneel down and say, "Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners," and then to get up and feel yourself a very decent sort of body, worthy of commendation, is to mock Almighty God. It is by no means a common thing to get hold of a real sinner, one who is truly so in his own esteem; and it is as pleasant as it is rare, for you can bring to the real sinner the real Saviour, and He will welcome him. I do not wonder that Hart said:

"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost hath made him so."

The point of contact between a sinner and Christ is sin. The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins, He never gave Himself for our righteousnesses. He comes to heal the sick, and the point He looks to is our sickness. When a physician is called in he has no patience with things apart from his calling. "Tut, tut!" he cries, "I do not care about your furniture, nor the number of your cows, nor what income tax you pay, nor what politics you admire; I have come to see a sick man about his disease, and if you will not let me deal with it I will be gone." When a sinner's corruptions are loathsome to himself, when his guilt is foul in his own nostrils, when he fears the death that will come of it, then he is really convinced by the Holy Spirit; and no one ever knows sin as his own personal ruin till the Holy

Spirit shows it to him. Conviction as to the Lord Jesus comes in the same way. We do not know Christ as our Saviour till the Holy Spirit is put within us. Our Lord says — “He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you,” and you never see the things of the Lord Jesus till the Holy Ghost shows them to you. To know Jesus Christ as your Saviour, as one who died for you in particular, is a knowledge which only the Holy Spirit imparts. To apprehend present salvation, as your own personally, comes by your being convinced of it by the Spirit. Oh, to be convinced of righteousness, and convinced of acceptance in the Beloved! This conviction cometh only of Him that hath called you, even of Him of whom the Lord saith, “I will put my Spirit within you.”

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit comes into us for *purification*. “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” When the Spirit comes, He infuses a new life, and that new life is a fountain of holiness. The new nature cannot sin, because it is born of God, and “it is a living and incorruptible seed.” This life produces good fruit, and good fruit only. The Holy Ghost is the life of holiness. At the same time, the coming of the Holy Ghost into the soul gives a mortal stab to the power of sin. The old man is not absolutely dead, but it is crucified with Christ. It is under sentence, and before the eye of the law it is dead; but as a man nailed to a cross may linger long, but yet he cannot live, so the power of evil dies hard, but die it must. Sin is an executed criminal: those nails which fasten it to the cross will hold it fast till no breath remains in it. God the Holy Ghost gives the power of sin its death wound. The old nature struggles in its dying agonies, but it is doomed, and die it must. But you never will overcome sin by your own power, nor by any energy short of that of the Holy Spirit. Resolves may bind it, as Samson was bound with cords; but sin will snap the cords asunder. The Holy Spirit lays the axe at the root of sin, and fall it must. The Holy Ghost within a man is “the Spirit of judgment, the Spirit of burning.” Do you know Him in that character? As the Spirit of judgment, the Holy Spirit pronounces sentence on sin, and it goes out with the brand of Cain upon it. He does more: He delivers sin over to burning. He executes the death penalty on that which He has judged. How many of our sins have we had to burn alive! and it has cost us no small pain to do it. Sin must be got out of us by fire, if no gentler means will serve; and the Spirit of God is a consuming fire. Truly, “our God is a consuming fire.” They

paraphrase it, “God out of Christ is a consuming fire”; but that is not Scripture: it is, “*our* God,” our covenant God, who is a consuming fire to refine us from sin. Has not the Lord said, “I will purely purge away all thy dross, and take away all thy sin”? This is what the Spirit does, and it is by no means easy work for the flesh, which would spare many a flattering sin if it could.

The Holy Spirit bedews the soul with purity till He saturates it. Oh, to have a heart saturated with holy influences till it shall be as Gideon’s fleece, which held so much dew that Gideon could wring out a bowl full from it! Oh, that our whole nature were filled with the Spirit of God; that we were sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit! Sanctification is the result of the Holy Spirit being put within us.

Next, the Holy Ghost acts in the heart as the Spirit of *preservation*. Where He dwells men do not go back unto perdition. He works in them a watchfulness against temptation day by day. He works in them to wrestle against sin. Rather than sin a believer would die ten thousand deaths. He works in believers union to Christ, which is the source and guarantee of acceptable fruitfulness. He creates in the saints those holy things which glorify God, and bless the sons of men. All true fruit is the fruit of the Spirit. Every true prayer must be “praying in the Holy Ghost.” He helpeth our infirmities in prayer. Even the hearing of the Word of the Lord is of the Spirit, for John says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice.” Everything that comes of the man, or is kept alive in the man, is first infused and then sustained and perfected of the Spirit. “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.” We never go an inch towards heaven in any other power than that of the Holy Ghost. We do not even stand fast and remain steadfast except as we are upheld by the Holy Spirit. The vineyard which the Lord hath planted He also preserves; as it is written, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Did I hear that young man say, “I should like to become a Christian, but I fear I should not hold out? How am I to be preserved?” A very proper inquiry for “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” Temporary Christians are no Christians: only the believer who continues to believe will enter heaven. How, then, can we hold on in such a world as this? Here is the answer. “I will put my spirit within you.” When a city has been captured

in war, those who formerly possessed it seek to win it back again; but the king who captured it sends a garrison to live within the walls, and he said to the captain, "Take care of this city that I have conquered, and let not the enemy take it again." So the Holy Ghost is the garrison of God within our redeemed humanity, and he will keep us to the end. "May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." For preservation, then, we look to the Holy Spirit.

Lest I weary you, I will be very brief upon the next point: the Holy Spirit within us is for *guidance*. The Holy Spirit is given to lead us into all truth. Truth is like a vast grotto, and the Holy Spirit brings torches, and shows us all the splendour of the roof; and since the passage seems intricate, He knows the way, and He lead us into the deep things of God. He opens up to us one truth after another, by His light and by His guidance, and thus we are "taught of the Lord." He is also our practical guide to heaven, helping and directing us on the upward journey. I wish Christian people oftener inquired of the Holy Ghost as to guidance in their daily life. Know ye not that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? You need not always be running to this friend and to that to get direction: wait upon the Lord in silence, sit still in quiet before the oracle of God. Use the judgment God has given you; but when that suffices not, resort to Him whom Mr. Bunyan calls "the Lord High Secretary," who lives within, who is infinitely wise, and who can guide you by making you to "hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." The Holy Ghost will guide you in life; He will guide you in death; and He will guide you to glory. He will guard you from modern error, and from ancient error, too. He will guide you in a way that you know not; and through the darkness He will lead you in a way you have not seen: these things will He do unto you, and not forsake you.

Oh, this precious text! I seem to have before me a great cabinet full of jewels rich and rare. May God the Holy Ghost Himself come and hand these out to you, and may you be adorned with them all the days of your life!

Last of all, "I will put my spirit within you," that is, by way of *consolation*, for His choice name is "The Comforter." Our God would not have His children unhappy, and therefore, He Himself, in the third Person of the blessed Trinity, has undertaken the office of Comforter. Why does

your face such mournful colours wear? God can comfort you. You that are under the burden of sin; it is true no man can help you into peace, but the Holy Ghost can. O God, to every seeker here who has failed to final rest, grant Thy Holy Spirit! Put Thy Spirit within him, and he will rest in Jesus. And you dear people of God, who are worried, remember that worry and the Holy Ghost are very contradictory one to another. "I will put my spirit within you" means that you shall become gentle, peaceful, resigned, and acquiescent in the divine will. Then you will have faith in God that all is well. That text with which I began my prayer this morning was brought home to my heart this week. Our dearly beloved friend Adolph Saphir passed away last Saturday, and his wife died three or four days before him. When my dear brother, Dr. Sinclair Patterson, went to see him, the beloved Saphir said to him, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Nobody would have quoted that passage but Saphir, the Biblical student the lover of the word, the lover of the God of Israel. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." His dear wife is gone, and he himself is ill; but "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." This is a deep well of overflowing comfort, if you understand it well. God's promise is light as well as his promise, and the Holy Spirit makes us know this. God's word and will and way are all light to his people, and in him is no darkness at all for them. God himself is purely and only light. What if there be darkness in me, there is no darkness in him; and his Spirit causes me to fly to him! What if there be darkness in my family, there is no darkness in my covenant God, and his Spirit makes me rest in him. What if there be darkness in me by reason of my failing strength, there is no failing in him, and there is no darkness in him: his Spirit assures me of this. David says — "God my exceeding joy"; and such He is to us. "Yea, mine own God is he"! Can you say, "My God, my God"? Do you want anything more? Can you conceive of anything beyond your God? Omnipotent to work all for ever! Infinite to give! Faithful to remember! He is all that is good. Light only: "in him is no darkness at all." I have all light, yea, all things, when I have my God. The Holy Spirit makes us apprehend this when He is put within us. Holy Comforter, abide with us, for then we enjoy the light of heaven. Then are we always peaceful and even joyful; for we walk in unclouded light. In Him our happiness sometimes rises into great waves of delight, as if it leaped up to the glory. The Lord make this text your own — "I will put my Spirit within you." Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

GRATITUDE FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE GRAVE

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, January 3rd, 1892,

Delivered By

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House, which commemorated the fifth year of a life often threatened by grievous sickness.

[Will the reader kindly note this before he reads the discourse? — C.H.S.]

“I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.”

— Psalm 118:17, 18.

How very differently we view things at different times and in differing states of mind! Faith takes a bright and cheerful view of matters, and speaks very confidently, “I shall not die, but live.” When we are slack as to our trust in God, and give way to misgivings and doubts and fears, we sing in the minor key, and say, “I shall die. I shall never live through this trouble. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy; and that day is hastening on. Hope is failing me. Bad times are at the door. I shall not live through this crisis.” Thus our tongues show the condition of our inner man. We talk according to our frames and feelings, and would make others think that things are as we see them with our jaundiced eyes. Is it not a pity that we give a tongue to our unbelief? Would it not be better to be dumb when we are doubtful? Muzzle that dog of unbelief! Dog did I call him? He is a wolf; or should I call him hound of hell? His voice is that of Apollyon: it is full of blasphemy against God.

Unbelieving utterances will do no good to yourself, and will do harm to those who listen to your babblings. It would be wise to say, "If I should speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." Let us be dumb with silence when we cannot speak to the Glory of God. But, oh, it is a blessed thing, when faith is in our spirit reigning and powerful, to let it have ample opportunity to proclaim the honours of his name! To give his heart a tongue, is wise in man when his heart itself is wise. The more talk we get from the mouth of faith, the better: her lips drop sweet-smelling myrrh. A silent faith, if there be such a thing, robs others of benedictions; and at the same time it does worse, for it robs God of his glory. When we have a joyous faith in full operation, let us communicative, and let us openly and boldly say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." I would follow my own advice, and crave a patient hearing of you.

You know, perhaps, that this text was inscribed by Martin Luther upon his study wall, where he could always see it when at home. Many Reformers had been done to death — Huss, and others who preceded him, had been burnt at the stake; Luther was cheered by the firm conviction that he was perfectly safe until his work was done. In this full assurance he went bravely to meet his enemies at the Diet of Worms, and indeed, went courageously whenever duty called him. He felt that God had raised him up to declare the glorious doctrine of justification by faith, and all the other truths of what he believed to be the gospel of God; and therefore no faggots could burn him, and no sword could kill him till that work was done. Thus he bravely wrote out his belief, and set it where many eyes would see it, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." It was no idle boast; but a calm and true conclusion from his faith in God and fellowship with him. May you and I, when we are tried, be able, through faith in God, to meet trouble with the like brave thoughts and speeches! We cannot show our courage unless we have difficulties and troubles. A man cannot become a veteran soldier if he never goes to battle. No man can get his sea legs if he lives always on land. Rejoice, therefore, in your tribulations, because they give you opportunities of exhibiting a believing confidence, and thereby glorifying the name of the Most High. But take heed that you have faith, true faith in God; and do not become a puppet of impressions, much less a slave of the judgments of others. To have David's faith, you must be as David. No man may take up a

confidence of his own making: it must be a real work of the Spirit, and growth of grace within, grasping with living tendrils the promise of the living God.

I will read the passage from the Psalms over again, and we will consider it by God's help. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over to death."

First, here is *the believer's view of his afflictions*. "The Lord hath chastened me sore." Secondly, here is *the believer's comfort under those afflictions*. "He hath given me over to death. I shall not die, but live." And, thirdly, here is *the believer's conduct after his afflictions and after his deliverance from them* — "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

I. At the outset, here is THE BELIEVER'S VIEW OF HIS AFFLICTIONS. "The Lord hath chastened me sore."

On the surface of the works we see the good man's clear observation that *his afflictions come from God*. It is true he perceived the secondary hand, for he says, "Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall." There was one at work who aimed to make him fall. His afflictions were the work of a cruel enemy. Yes; but that enemy's assaults were being overruled by the Lord, and were made to work for his good; so David, in the present verse, corrects himself by saying, "*The Lord* hath chastened me sore. My enemy struck at me and he might make me fall; but in very truth my gracious God was using him to chasten me that I might *not* fall. The enemy was moved by malice, but God was working by him in love to my soul. The second agent sought my ruin, but the Great First Cause wrought my education and establishment."

It is well to have grace enough to see that tribulation comes from God: he fills the bitter cup as well as the sweet goblet. Troubles do not spring out of the dust, neither doth affliction grow up from the ground, like hemlock from the furrows of the field; but the Lord himself kindles the fiery furnace, and sits as a refiner at the door. Let us not dwell too much upon the part played by the devil, as though he were a power co-ordinate with God. He is a fallen creature, and his very existence depends upon the will and permission of the Most High. His power is borrowed, and can only be used as the infinite omnipotence of God permits. His wickedness is his

own, but his existence is not self-derived. Blame the devil, and blame all of his servants as much as you will; but still believe in the mysterious and consoling truth that, in the truest sense, the Lord sends trials upon his saints. "Explain this statement," say you. Oh, no; I am not called upon to explain it, but to believe it. A great many things, when they are said to be explained by modern thinkers, are merely explained away, and I have not yet begun to learn that wretched art. Remember how Peter told the Jews that he, whom God by his determinate counsel and foreknowledge decreed to die, even his son Jesus Christ, nevertheless taken by them with wicked hands, when they had crucified and slain him. The death of Christ was pre-determined in the counsel of God, and yet it was none the less an atrocious crime on the part of ungodly men. The omnipotence and providence of God are to be believed; but man's responsibility is not therefore to be questioned. Our afflictions may come distinctly from man, as the result of persecution or malice; and yet they may come with even greater certainty from the Lord, and may be the needful outcome of his special love to us.

For this reason we may wisely moderate our anger against second causes. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick; if he were more intelligent, he would snap at the person using the stick; and, if that intelligence were governed by the spirit of obedience, he would yield to the blow, and learn a lesson from it. Thus, when Shimei reviled David, and Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, said unto king, "Why should this dead dog curse my Lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head;" David meekly replied, "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hath thou done so?" A sight of God's hand in a trial is the end of rebellion against it in the case of every good man. He says, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." We may lie at his feet, and cry, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me;" but, if the reason does not appear, we must bow in reverent submission, and say with one of old, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Job saw the Lord in his many tribulations, and therefore praised him, saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord that taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Surely there is nothing better for a man of God than to perceive that his smarts and sorrows come from his Father's hand, for then he will say, "The will of the Lord be done." This is the great point in the believer's view of his

afflictions: “*He maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.*”

Next, the believer perceives that *his trials come on as a chastening*. “The Lord hath *chastened* me sore.” When a child is chastised, two things are clear: first, that there is something wrong in him, or that there is something deficient in him, so that he needs to be corrected or instructed; and, secondly, it shows that his father has a tender care for his benefit, and acts in loving wisdom towards him. This is certainly true if the father is an eminently kind and yet prudent parent. Children do not think that there can be any need for chastening them; but when years have matured their judgment, they will know better. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous;” if it did seem joyous, it would not be chastening. The “need be” is not only that we have manifold trials, but that we be in heaviness through them. In the smart of the sorrow lies the blessing of the chastisement. God chastens us in the purest love, because he sees that there is an absolute necessity for it: “for he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” Our fathers, according to the flesh, too often corrected us according to their own pleasure, and yet we gave them reverence; but the Father of our spirits corrects us only of necessity — a necessity to which he is too wise to close his eye. Shall we not, therefore, pay greater reverence to him, and bow before him, and live? When Hezekiah was recovered of his sickness, he wrote, “O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.” I find not that men live by carnal pleasure, nor that the life of the spirit is ever found in the wine-vat or in the oil-press; but I do find that life and health often come to saints through the briny tears, through the bruising of the flesh, and the oppression of the spirit. So have I found it, and I bear my willing witness that sickness has brought me health, loss has conferred gain, and I doubt not that one day death will bring me fuller life.

Be wise then, dear child of God, and look upon your present affliction as a chastening. “What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” There is not a more profitable instrument in all God’s house than the rod. No honey was sweeter than that which dropped from the end of Jonathan’s rod; but that is nothing to the sweetness of the consolation which comes through Jehovah’s rod. Our brightest joys are the birth of our bitterest griefs. When the woman has her

travail pangs, joy comes to the house because the man-child is born; and sorrow is to us also, full often, the moment of the birth of our graces. A chastened spirit is a gracious spirit; and how shall we obtain it except we are chastened? Like our Lord Jesus, we learn obedience by the things which we suffer. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without sorrow, and he never will have while the world stands. Let us, therefore, bless God for all his dealings, and in a filial spirit confess, "Thou, Lord, hast chastened me."

Consider the psalmist's view of his affliction a little more carefully. *He noted that his trials were sore*: he says, "The Lord hath chastened me sore." Perhaps we are willing to own in general that our trouble is of the Lord; but there is a soreness in it which we do not ascribe to him, but to the malice of the enemy, or some other second cause. The false tongue is so ingenious in slander that it has touched the tenderest part of our character, and has cur us to the quick. Are we to believe that this also is, in some sense, of the Lord? Assuredly we are. If it be not of the Lord, then it is a matter for despair. If this evil comes apart from divine permission, where are we? How can a trial be met which is independent of divine rule, and outside of the sacred zone of providential government? It is hopeful when we find that all our ills lie within the ring-fence of omnipotent overruling. It is one comfort that we see a wall of fire round about us, a circle so complete that even the devil, malicious as he is, cannot break through it, to do more than the Lord allows. The camels are gone, the sheep, the oxen, the servants, all are destroyed: all this is most trying; but it is still true — "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." But, see, another messenger comes, and cries, "There came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead." Might not Job, then, have said, "This is a blow which I cannot bear; for it is evidently from the prince of the power of the air"? No, but even after that, he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." When his wife said, "Curse God, and die," he still blessed God, and held his integrity. He told her that she spoke as one of the foolish speaketh, and then he wisely added, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." May we stand fast in patience as he did, even when our troubles overflow!

It is folly to imagine, as we have sometimes done, that we could bear anything except that which we are called upon to endure. We are like the young man who says he wants a situation. What can you do? He can do anything. That man you never engage, because you know that he can do nothing. So it is with us. If we say, "I could bear anything but this," we prove our universal impatience. If we had the choice of our crosses, the one we should choose would turn out to be more inconvenient than that which God appoints for us; and yet we will have it that our present cross is unsuitable and specially galling. I would say to any who are of that mind, "If your burden does not fit your shoulder, bear it till it does." Time will reconcile you to the yoke if grace abides with you. It is not for us to choose our affliction; that remains with him who chooses our inheritance for us. Read well this word, "The Lord hath hastened me sore," and see the Lord's hand in the soreness of your trial. Even while the wound is raw, and the smart is fresh; be conscious that the Lord is near.

Yet there is in the verse a "but", for the *psalmist perceives that his trial is limited*; "but he hath not given me over to death." Certain of the *buts* in Scripture are among the choicest jewels we have. Before us is a "but" which shows that, however deep affliction may be, there is a bottom to the abyss. There is a limit to the force, the sharpness, the duration and the number of our trials.

"If God appoints the number ten,
They ne'er can be eleven."

Whenever the Lord mixes a potion for his people, he weighs each ingredient, measures the bitters, grain by grain, and allows not even a particle in excess to mingle in the draught. Like a careful dispenser, he will not pour out a drop too little or too much.

"To his church, his joy, and treasure,
Every trial works for good:
They are dealt in weight and measure,
Yet how little understood;
Not in anger,
But from his dear covenant love."

Our Father's anger at our sin will never blaze into wrath against us, though in mercy he will smite our sins. Remember, then, this gracious boundary.

“The Lord hath chastened me sore: *but* he hath not given me over unto death.” We have never yet experienced a trouble which might not have been worse. One affliction kills another: the wind never blows east and west at the same time. When the Lord smites you abound, so do consolations abound through Christ Jesus. The whole band of troubles never comes forth at once. Everything painful is graded and proportioned to the man and his strength, and the object for which it is sent. With the trial the Lord makes the way of escape that we may be able to bear it. Faith can see an end and limit where natures dim eye sees endless confusion. Where the carnal sense —

“Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end,”

faith looks over the intervening space, and comforts herself with that which is yet to come. Faith sings pleasant songs when she foots it over weary roads.

“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,
So let’s smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”

The Lord keep your faith alive, my brethren and sisters, and then whatever trials surge around you, you will sit on the Rock of ages, above the waves, and joyfully sing praises unto your divine Deliverer! Oh, how sweet to say, as I now do, “The Lord hath chastened me sore: *but he hath not given me over unto death*”!

II. This brings me secondly, to consider THE BELIEVER’S COMFORT UNDER HIS AFFLICTIONS. The believer’s comfort under his afflictions is this — “I shall not die, but live.”

Occasionally this comes in the form of a presentiment. I do not think that I am superstitious: I fancy that I am pretty clear of that vice; yet I have had presentiments concerning things to come or not to come; and, moreover, I have not met with so many Christian men who, in the time of trouble have received singular warnings, or sweet assurances of coming deliverance, that I am bound to believe that the Lord does sometimes whisper to the heart of his children, and assure them in trial that they shall not be crushed, and in sickness that they shall not die. How do you understand the story of John Wycliffe, at Lutterworth, in any other way than this? He had been

speaking against the monks, and various abuses of the church. He was the first man known to history that preached the gospel in England during the Popish ages — we know him as the Morning Star of the Reformation. He was a man so great that, if he had possessed a printing-press, we might never have needed a Luther; for he had an even clearer light than that great Reformer. He lacked the means of spreading his doctrine, which the art of printing supplied. He did much: he prepared everything to Luther's hand: and Luther was but the proclaimer of Wycliffe's doctrine. Wycliffe was ill — very ill, and the friars came round him, like crows round a dying sheep. They professed to be full of tender pity; but they were right glad that their enemy was going to die. So they said to him, "Do you not repent? Before we can give you viaticum — the last oiling before you die — would it not be well to retract the hard things which you have said against the zealous friars, and his Holiness of Rome? We are eager to forget the past, and give you the last sacrament in peace." Wycliffe begged an attendant to help him sit up; and then he cried with all his strength, "I shall not die, but live, to declare the works of the Lord, and to expose the wickedness of the friars." He did not die, either: death himself could not have killed him then; for he had work to do, and the Lord made him immortal until it was done. How could Wycliffe know that he spoke truly? Certainly he was free from all foolhardy brag; but there was upon his mind a foreshadowing of future work that he had to do, and he felt that he could not die until it was accomplished. Now, do not be making up presentiments about all sorts of things because I have said that sometimes the Lord grants them to his saints. This would be a mischievous piece of absurdity. I remember a young woman, who lived not far from here, who had a presentiment that she would die. I do not think that there was really much the matter with her; but she refused to eat, and was likely to be starved. I went to see her, and she told me that she had a presentiment that she should die, and therefore she should not waste food by eating it. She spoke to me very solemnly about this presentiment, and I replied, "I believe there may be such things." Yes: she was sure I was on her side! Then I went on to say, I once had a presentiment that I was a donkey, and it turned out true in my case; and now I had much the same presentiment about her. This surprised her, and I asked her friends to bring her food. She said she would not eat it; and then I told her that if she was resolved on suicide, I would mention it at church-meeting that evening, and put her out of the church, since would

could not have suicides in our membership. She could not bear to be put out of the church, and began to eat, and it turned out that my presentiment about her was correct; she had been foolish, and she had the good sense to see that it was so. I felt bound to tell you this story, lest you should fancy that I would support you in sentimental nonsense. While there are so many stupid people in the world, we have no need to give cautions where the wise do not need them. Forecasts of good from the Lord may come to those who are sore sick; and when they do, they help them to recover. We are of good courage when an inward confidence enables us to say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

This, however, I only mention by the way. When a believer is in trouble *he derives great comfort from his reliance upon the compassion of God*. The Lord scourges his sons, but he does not slay them. The believer says, "My Father may make me smart with the blow of a cruel one; but he will do me no real harm, nor allow anyone else to injure me. He will not lay upon me more than is right, nor above what I am able to bear. He will stay his hand when he sees that I have no strength left. Moreover, I know that even when he brings me very low, still underneath me are the everlasting arms. If the Lord kill, it is only to make alive: if he wound, it is that he may heal. I am sure of that." O believer, never let anything drive you away from this confidence, for it has sure truth for its foundation! The Lord is good, and his mercy endureth forever. It is not killing, but curing, that God means when he takes the sharp lancet in his hand. The nauseous medicine, which makes the heart sick, works for the cure of a worse sickness. "His compassions fail not." He may often put his hand into the bitter box, but he has sweet cordials ready to take the taste away. For a small moment has he forsaken us, but with great mercies will he return to us. You have an effectual comfort if your faith can keep its hold upon the blessed fact of the Lord's fatherly compassion.

Next, faith comforts the tried child of God by assuring him of the forgiveness of his sin, and his *security from punishment*. Please to notice the very distant difference between chastisement and punishment. I do not say between the meaning of the words, but between the two things which I just now would indicate by those terms. Here is a boy who has committed a theft. He is brought before the magistrate that he may be punished. Punitive justice will be executed upon him by imprisonment or by a birch

rod. Another boy has also stolen — stolen from his father, and he is brought before his father, not to be punished as a law-breaker, but to be chastised. There is a great difference between the punishment awarded by justice and the chastisement appointed by love. They may be alike in painfulness, but how different in meaning! The father does not give to the child what he would deserve if it were a punishment according to the law, but what he thinks will cure him of the wrong-doing by making him feel that his sin brings sorrow. The magistrate, although he desires the good of the offender, has mainly to consider the law in its bearings upon the whole mass of the population, and he punishes as a matter of justice that which wrongs the commonwealth; but the parent acts on other principles. “The Lord hath chastened me sore,” and in that he has added a fatherly part; “but he hath not given me over unto death” which would have been my lot if he had dealt with me as a judge. My heart trembles at his sword, and cries, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” The sentence of justice has been fulfilled upon our Lord, and our comfort is that now there is nothing punitive in all our troubles. “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;” nor will he do so, for he has already laid our sins upon Christ, and Christ has vindicated the law by bearing its penalty, so that nothing more in the way of penalty is demanded by the moral government of God. That which we receive from the rod of the Lord bears the blessed aspect of chastening from a father’s hand; and this is a gladsome fact, which makes even the sharpest smart to be profitable. “Surely the bitterness of death is past,” when, in the case of the believer, even death has ceased to be the penalty of sin, and is changed into a sweet falling asleep upon the bosom of the Well-Beloved, to wake up in his likeness. Every other affliction is changed in the same fashion. Our wasps have become bees: their sting is not the prominent thought, but the honey which they lay up in store. “All things work together for good to them that love God,” and chastisement is chief among those “all things.” What a well of comforting thought is here!

Furthermore, it is a great blessing to a child of God to feel *a full assurance that he has eternal life in Christ Jesus*. “The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.” Notice the words, “Given me over.” It is the most awful thing out of hell to be *given over* by God. I fear that there are some such persons. Does not the psalmist refer to such

when he says, "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish"? While God's own people are chastened every morning, and plagued all day long, the ungodly prosper in the world, and increase in riches. Of his chosen the Lord says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." But those who are not the Lord's are left unchastened, because the Lord hath said of them, "Let them alone, they are given unto idols." They are allowed their transient mirth; let them make the most they can of it, for their end will be desolation. Unbroken prosperity and undisturbed health may be signs of being "given over unto death"; and they are in such cases where sin is committed without pangs of conscience, or apprehensions of judgment. Such freedom from fear may be maintained even in death: "There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm." All goes quietly with them; "Like sheep they are laid in the grave." But "in hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments." To be given over unto death is often followed by callousness, presumption, and bravado; but it is a dreadful doom, the direst sentence from the throne of judgment as to this life. But you, dear child of God, have this comfort, *he* has not given *you* over, he is thinking upon you. Men do not prune the vine they mean to uproot; nor thresh out the weeds which they mean to burn. He who is chastened is not given over to destruction. Years ago, I was taken very ill, in Marseilles, while attempting to come home to England. As I lay in bed, it seemed as if the cruel mistral wind was driving through my bones, and breaking them with agony. I ordered a fire to be kindled; but when I saw the man begin to light it with a bundle of little branches, I cried out to him, "Pray let me look at that." I found that he was using the dry prunings of the vine, and my tears were in my eyes as I remembered the words — "Men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Comfort followed, for I thought, "I am not feeling, like those dried-up shoots; but I am the bleeding vine, which is sharply cut with the pruning-knife; I feel the keen blade in every part of me." Then I could say, "The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over." What joy lies in this, "He hath not given me over"! As long as the father chastens his boy, he has hope of him; if he ceased to do so altogether, we might fear that he thought him too bad to be reclaimed. Be glad, then, dear child of God, that since the Lord chastens you sore, he has not erased your

name from his heart, and his hands, nor yielded you up to your enemy's power.

Another meaning may be found in this text, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death." *We are comforted by reliance upon God's power for success in our life-work.* The critics said — and I must quote this because this sermon is very much a personal one — the critics said, when the lad commenced his preaching, that it was a nine days' wonder, and would soon come to an end. When the people joined the church in great numbers, they were "a parcel of boys and girls." Many of those "boys and girls" are here to-night, faithful to God unto this hour. Then there came upon me a heavy, heavy stroke — a sore chastening, which those of us who were present would never forget if we live for a century; and we seemed to be made the reproach of all men, through an accident which we could not have foreseen or prevented. But still the testimony for God in this place, by the same voice, has not ceased, nor lost its power. Still the people throng to hear the gospel after these thirty years and more, and still the doctrines of grace are to the front, notwithstanding the opposition. In the darkest hour of my ministry I might have declared, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." If you have been set on fire by a divine truth, the world cannot put an extinguisher upon you. That candle which God has lighted, the devils of hell cannot blow out. If you are commissioned of God to do a good work, give your whole heart to it, trust in the Lord, and you will not fail. I bear my joyful witness to the power of God to work mightily by the most insignificant of instruments.

"The feeblest saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way."

Once more, though we may die, *we are sustained by the expectation of immortality.* When we gather up our feet in the last bed, we may utter this text in a full and sweet sense, "I shall not die, but live." When Wycliffe died as to his body, the real Wycliffe did not die. Some of his books were carried to Bohemia, and John Huss learned the gospel from them, and began to preach. They burnt John Huss, and Jerome of Prague; but Huss foretold, as he died, that another would arise after him, whom they should not be able to put down; and in due time he more than lived again in

Luther. Is Luther dead? Is Calvin dead to-day? That last man the moderns have tried to bury in a dunghill of misrepresentation; but he lives, and will live, and the truths that he taught will survive all the calumniators that have sought to poison it. Die! Often the death of a man is a kind of new birth to him; when he himself is gone physically, he spiritually survives, and from the grave there shoots up a tree of life whose leaves heal nations. O worker for God, death cannot touch thy sacred mission! Be thou content to die if the truth shall live better because thou diest. Be thou content to die, because death may be to thee enlargement of thine influence. Good men die as dies seed-corn which thereby abideth not alone. When saints are apparently laid in the earth, they quit the earth, and rise and mount to heaven-gate, and enter into immortality. No, when the sepulchre receives this mortal frame, we shall not die, but live. Then shall we come to our true stature and beauty, and put on our royal robes, our glorious Sabbath-dress.

III. So I finish with just two or three words on THE BELIVER'S CONDUCT AFTER TROUBLE AND DELIVERANCE. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

Here is declaration. If we had no troubles, we should all have the less to declare. A person who has no experience of tribulation, what great deliverance has he to speak of? Such persons despise the afflicted, and suspect the character of the choicest of men, for lack of power to understand them. What does the man know about the sea who has only walked on the beach? Get with an old sailor, who has been a dozen times around the world, and often wrecked, and he will interest you. So the much-tried Christian has great wonders to declare, and these are chiefly the works of the Lord; for "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." Tried Christians see how God sustains in trouble, and how he delivers out of it, and they declare his works openly: they cannot help doing so. They are so interested themselves in what God has done that they grow enthusiastic over it; and if they held their peace, the stones would cry out.

If you read the chapter further down, you will find that they not only give forth a declaration, but they offer *adoration*. They are so charmed with what God has done for them, that they laud and magnify the name of the

Lord, saying, "I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." The saints of God, when they are rescued from their sorrows, are sure to sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour."

This done, they make a further *dedication* of themselves to their delivering God. As the psalm puts it, "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." It was very dark! It was very, very dark! We could not see our hand, much less the hand of God! We were frozen with fear. We thought we were as dead men, laid out for burial; when suddenly the Lord's face shown in upon us, and all darkness was gone, and we leaped into joyful security, crying "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." We were convinced that it was none other than the true God who had removed the midnight gloom. Doubts, infidelities, agnosticisms — they were impossible. We said, "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light." In the fourth watch of the night, in the prison where the cold stone shut us in, where the darkness had never known a candle, there a light shone round about us, and an angel smote us on the side, and bade us put on our sandals, and gird ourselves, and follow him. We obeyed the word, and our chains fell off; and when we came to the iron gate which had always been our horror, it opened of its own accord, and we went out into the streets of the city, and we scarcely felt that it could be true, but thought we saw a vision. But when we had considered the thing, and found it was even ourselves, and ourselves set in a large place at perfect liberty, then we said, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." God hath showed us light, and we will live to him for ever and for ever. Oh, you, tried believers, who have, nevertheless, not been given over unto death, who can say to-night, "I shall not die, but live," present yourselves anew unto your delivering Lord as living sacrifices through Jesus Christ your Lord! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON Psalm 118.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 708, 73 (Part II.), 710.

This sermon begins a new volume; in fact, it commences Vol. 38 of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. I have, myself, selected it, and prepared it for the press, because it is most suitable as my own personal testimony at the present moment. The subject is even more my own this day than it was seven and a half years ago; for I have been in deeper waters, and nearer

to the mouth of the grave. With my whole soul I praise delivering grace. To the Lord God, the God of Israel, I consecrate myself anew. For the covenant of grace, for the revelation of infallible truth in the Bible, for the atonement by blood, and the immutable love of the ever blessed Three-in-One, I am a witness; and more and more would I abide faithful to the gospel of the grace of God. I see each day more reasons for faith, and fewer excuses for doubt. Those who will may ship their anchors and be drifted about the current of the age; but I will sing, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise!"

The whole passage, Psalm 118:13-18, is inscribe upon a marble slab on the Jubilee House at the back of the Tabernacle, and I am told that many went to read it while I lay in the greatest peril through sore sickness, and were comforted thereby. When the Lord permits me to return, I must raise yet another memorial to his praise.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

“THOU ART NOW THE BLESSED OF THE LORD.”

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day

January 10th, 1892

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-Day Evening, May 3, 1891.

“Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.”

— Genesis 26:29

These words truly describe the position of many whom I address at this time. There are hundreds here upon whom my eye can rest, and to any one of whom I might point with this finger, or rather, to whom I might extend this hand, to give a hearty shake, and say, “Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.” I need not say it in the same spirit, nor for the same reason, that the Philistines did. They had behaved basely towards Isaac, and now that he had prospered, they urged him to forget the past. They meant, “This is why we trust that you will deal kindly with us, and overlook our hard usage; for, in spite of all, God has so blessed you that you need not be fretful and pettish, and remember what we have done.” I am glad that I am under no necessity to strive to make up a quarrel in this way. These many years we have dwelt in peace, and have enjoyed sweet fellowship together. You have borne with my weaknesses often, and bestowed upon me a wealth of affection which I am sure I do not deserve.

So, though I use the language of Abimelech and his friends, my motive is a very different one. Yet the truth is the same concerning many a one here: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

There is, however, much force in the argument which these Philistines used. If God has richly blessed us, notwithstanding all our faults and failures, surely we should learn to forgive many injuries done to ourselves. If the Lord forgives us our debt of ten thousand talents, we must be willing to forgive our fellow-servant his debt of a hundred pence. Child of God, if you are now the blessed of the Lord, you will often turn a blind eye towards the offenses of your fellow-men. You will say, "God has so blessed me, that I can well overlook any wrongs that you have inflicted, any hard words that you have said. I am now blessed of the Lord; so let bygones be bygones." May you have grace given to you to do that now, if any of you have had a little squabble with any other! If there have been any difficulties between any of you, I would hope that, before I really get into my subject, while with my finger I point you out and say to each one of you, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord," you will immediately say, "As surely as that is true, I do from my very heart forgive all who have offended me, whether Philistine, or Israelites, or Gentiles. How can I do otherwise who myself have received such grace while so unworthy?"

Remember, that this was spoken by the Philistine king as a reason why he wished to have Isaac for a friend. In your choice of friends, choose those who are the friends of God. If you would have a blessing upon your friendship, select a man whom God has blessed. Look out for one who is a disciple of Christ and say, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord; therefore I seek thine acquaintance. Come under my roof; you will bring a blessing with you." Speak to me in the street; your morning word will be a benediction to me." It was the old custom with apostolic men to say, as they entered a house, "Peace be unto this house." We have given up all idea of blessing our fellow-men in that way. But why have you done so? Is it from a want of love, or want of faith in our own prayer that God would make it even so? For my part, I value a good man's blessing. As I drove up a hill, in the country, some time ago, a poor man and his wife were walking down the hill. I had never seen them before; but the woman pulled the husband by his coat; they both stood and looked at me, and at last she said, quite loudly, "It's him, God bless him!" and although her greeting

was not quite grammatical, it evidently came from her heart, and I felt happier for it, as I went on my way. I saw her afterwards, and asked her the reason of her words, "Why," she said, "I have read your sermons for many a year, and I could not help saying, 'God bless him!' when I saw you, for you have been a blessing to me." Thus that humble woman, being blessed of the Lord, became a blessing to me; and we all of us, even the most obscure, who know the grace of God, might daily be like a great benediction in the midst of the people. When you think of your minister, say sometimes, "God bless him!" it will do him good to hear it. Say to your friend, "God bless you!" Say to your children, "God bless you, my dear boy! The Lord bless you, my dear girl!" They will be the better for it, if you yourself are the blessed of the Lord. You, grandsires, lay your hands on the children's heads, and bless them; they will not forget it when they grow up. It may be that you have done much more for them than you have thought. Concerning his flock the Lord says, "I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." God's people are blessed that they may bless; therefore, for the sake of others, as well as for your own, seek that my text may be abundantly true of you. May this be your prayer —

"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing,
Thou art scattering full and free;
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing;
Let some droppings fall on me,
Even me."

It was for this reason that the Philistines sought the friendship of Isaac, because they could truly say to him, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

I want not so much to preach from this text as to ask every believer in Christ to feel that it is personally true. Once you were condemned; but, being in Christ Jesus, "there is therefore now no condemnation." "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Once you were at enmity against God; but now, being reconciled to God by the death of his Son, you are his friend: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." "Ye were sometimes in darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." How great the change for the man or woman to whom we can say "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord"!

There was a day when I was cursed, and there was a day when I loved sin, and opposed God's will; but now I love sin no longer, and I find my highest delight in doing the will of my Father in heaven. My soul, if this be true, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord"; thou art a miracle of mercy; thou art a prodigy of grace; and truly, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Sit still in your pews, ye people of God, and roll this sweet morsel under your tongue! Once, because you believed not, the wrath of God was resting upon you, but now you can say, "O Lord! I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Surely then "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art poor, perhaps, in this world's goods; but being an heir of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," why, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Or, perchance, you are weak and ill, and scarcely able to be in your place; but though thy flesh and strength fail, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," for by his grace, you will triumph over all. With many a fear and many a care oppressed, still "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," and on him thou canst cast thy care, and from him receive deliverance from all thy fears. Whatever thy distresses, this overwhelms them all as with a flood of joy. You can join with one who, though in a very humble station of life, says, —

"O joy! 'tis mine, this life divine,
Life hid with Christ in God;
Once sin-defiled, now reconciled,
And washed in Jesus' blood.

"Oft far astray from Christ the Way,
I went with wilful feet;
From hopeless track, love brought me back,
With words of welcome sweet."

If thou canst truly sing this sweet song, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art not yet perfect; thou art not yet taken out of the body to be with thy Lord in bliss; thou art not yet risen from the dead to stand before the throne of God in thy body of resurrection glory; but yet thou art now, even now, the blessed of the Lord. Will you let the flavour of this

sweet truth be in your mouth, and in your heart, while I seek to open this subject to you?

I. I would remark upon it, first, that in the case of Isaac, **THIS WAS THE TESTIMONY OF ENEMIES.** It was the Philistines who said, “Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.” There are some of God’s people who are so evidently favoured of heaven that even those who despise and oppose them cannot help saying of them, “They are the blessed of the Lord.” I wish that we were all such, so distinguished by piety, so marked out by strength of faith and prevalence of prayer, that even our Abimelechs might be forced to say to each of us, “Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.” What caused this heathen king and his companions to use such an expression about Isaac? In seeking the reasons which led them to see the bounty of the Lord in the case of Abraham’s son, we may find some signs of the blessing of God upon ourselves and upon our children.

I think, first, that *they saw it in his wonderful prosperity.* We read in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses, “Then Isaac sowed in the land, and received in the same year a hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possession of flocks and possession of herds, and great store of servants.” Prosperity is not always a token of blessing. It may be proof of the Lord’s favour, and it may not be. God sometimes gives most to those on earth who will have nothing in heaven; as if, seeing that he cannot bless them in eternity, he would let them enjoy the poor sweets of time. I have heard it said, that prosperity was the blessing of the old covenant and adversity the blessing of the new. Nevertheless, it is true that worldly prosperity may be sent, and has been sent, to the children of God, as a token of divine favour. It is not always when we eat the quails that they make us ill; God can send them in such a way that we may enjoy them, and be strengthened by them. He can give riches as well as poverty. That was the Philistines’ reason, and it is a Philistine’s reason. It is not a very satisfactory one, but it has some force, for the Lord Jesus himself gave the sign of blessing upon the meek, saying, “They shall inherit the earth;” and in the same memorable discourse upon the mount, he uttered the exhortation and promise, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things” — the things which the gentiles seek

after — “shall be added unto you.” So we may fairly construe the “mercies of God” as a sign of his blessing.

These Philistines had a further reason for thinking that Isaac was blessed of God; *they felt it by divine impression*. A secret spirit whispered to the king, “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.” God always has a way of making men feel “how awful goodness is.” They may jest and jeer against a Christian, but his life vanquishes them. They cannot help it. They must do homage to the supremacy of grace. The promise is still true, “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” God will impress upon the minds even of unbelievers this fact, that such a man, such a woman, is one whom God has blessed. Do you not know some believers who have such an air of other-worldliness about them, that though they mix freely with the people amongst whom they dwell, men instinctively acknowledge that “they have been with Jesus,” and have been blessed by him? I do not care to see pictures of the saints of old with a nimbus of light round their heads, even though they have been painted by the old masters, yet there is a something about one who lives a saintly life, a brightness encircling him, like the symbol of God’s presence, which separates him from those around him, and leads us to say to him, “Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.”

Further, before the Philistines bore this testimony to Isaac, no doubt *they remarked his gentleness*. I do believe that there is nothing that has such power over ungodly men as meekness of spirit, quietness of behavior, patience of character, and the continual conquest over an evil temper. If you grow angry when people are angry with you, you will have lost your position; but if you can be patient under persecution, if you can smile when they ridicule you, if you can yield your rights, if you can bear and continue to bear, you are greater than the man who has taken a city. Remember the blessing promised to the disciples of Christ who are peacemakers. They are not only the children of God, but “*they shall be called the children of God.*” People will say, “If any man is a true Christian, he is one;” they will have no doubt about it. When longsuffering, gentleness, and meekness are in the life, men begin to say to such a one, “Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.” As the gentleness of the Lord makes us great, the gentleness of the saints brings to God great glory. Anger hath a temporary sovereignty, that melts in the heat of the sun.

Quietness of spirit is king over all the land. If thou canst rule thyself, thou canst rule the world. Isaac conquered by his meekness; for when Abimelech saw that he yielded well after well rather than keep up a quarrel, he said to him, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Some of you do not understand this. "What!" you say, "are we not to stick up for ourselves?" That depends upon whose you are; if you are your own, take care of yourselves; but if you are Christ's, let him take care of you. "But," you say, "if you tread on a worm, it will turn." But surely you will not make a worm your pattern? Nay, but let the meek and lowly Christ be your example, and seek to be a partaker of his Spirit. He prayed even for his murderers, "Father, forgive them," and he ever sought to return good for evil. I pray you to do the same, cultivate a gentle spirit, and even worldlings will say to you, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Now, while these Philistines saw that God blessed Isaac, *they nevertheless envied him*, as we read in the fourteenth verse. How strange it is that men, who do not care to be blessed of God themselves, envy them who are blessed of him! I heard one say, "It is not just that God should have a chosen people." Sir, do you want to be one of God's people? These blessings which God gives to them, do you want to have them? You may have them, if you will. If you will not have them, I pray you do not quarrel with God because he chooses to give them where he wills. There are two great truths, which from this platform, I have proclaimed for many years. The first is, that salvation is free to every man who will have it; the second is, that God gives salvation to a people whom he has chosen; and these truths are not in conflict with one another in the least degree. If you want the blessing of the Lord, have it even now, for my commission as an ambassador of Christ is to beseech men to be reconciled to God; if you do not want it, do not quarrel with God for giving it to his own chosen. It was so with those Philistines — they wanted not Jehovah's blessing, and yet they envied Isaac, who had it.

But while they envied him, *they feared him, and courted his favour*. Do I speak to some young believer who has gone into a house of business, or some Christian woman who has been placed in a family where her religion exposes her to opposition? Let me counsel you to go straight on, taking no notice of the hindrances thrown in your way. You will first be envied; after that you will be feared; and after that you will be sought after, and your

company will be desired. If you can only keep as firm as Isaac did, never losing your temper, but always being gentle, and meek, and kind, you will conquer; and you who are to-day despised, will yet come to be honoured, even as Isaac was by the very Abimelech who had, just a little while before, asked him to go away.

A man of God, who was bearing testimony for the faith, on one occasion was pushed into a kennel by a person passing by, who said, as he thrust him in, "There, take that, John Bunyan." He took off his hat, and said, "I will take anything if you give me the name of John Bunyan. I count it such an honour to have that title, that you may do anything that you like with me." To be identified with those who have been blessed of the Lord is worth more than all the favours of the world. We are in good company. If men despise you, it matters little when God has blessed you. If they push you into the gutter for being a Christian, take your hat off, and thank the, for it is worth while to bear any scorn, that you may have the honour to be numbered with the followers of Christ. Rest assured that if you will count it a privilege even to be mocked for your faith, those who persecute you to-day, will acknowledge your high position to-morrow. It is a grand thing when any one of us thus gets the testimony of our enemies, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

II. Now, secondly, not only did his enemies thus bear witness to Isaac, saying, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord;" but **THIS WAS ALSO THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD.** It was because he had the witness of God that he was able so to behave as to secure the favourable verdict of the Philistines. Like Enoch before his translation, Isaac "had this testimony, that he pleased God." And was thus meekly able to bear the displeasure of the world. When they hunted him from one well, he digged another, yet all the time he with joy drew "water out of the wells of salvation." He might almost have sat for the picture which Jeremiah drew of the blessed man, centuries afterwards, when he said, "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Let us see, then, how Isaac had the testimony of God as to his blessedness.

First, this was the Lord's testimony to him *in promises founded upon the covenant* which he had made with Abraham his father. God said to Isaac, "I will be with thee, and will bless thee." In the third verse of this chapter, the promise is made doubly sure to Isaac when God says, "I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father." And in the twenty-fourth verse of the chapter, where the promise is renewed, it is still on the ground of the covenant: "I am with thee, and I will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake." Now, do you know anything of the covenant relationship between God and his people? The bulk of Christians nowadays are wholly ignorant on this subject. The preachers have forgotten it; yet the covenant is the top and bottom of all theology. He that is the master of the knowledge of the covenants has the key of true divinity. But the doctrine has gone out of date except with a few old-fashioned people, who are supposed to know no better, but who, in spite of all the taunts of their opponents, cling to the doctrines of grace, and find in them the very marrow and fatness of the truth of God. I love the promises of God because they are covenant promises God has engaged to keep his word with his people in the person of his dear Son. He has bound himself, by covenant with Christ, and will not, cannot go back from his word; and Christ has fulfilled the conditions of the covenant, and he who hath "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," will certainly, "make you perfect to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." The promise is a double promise when it is confirmed in Jesus. Though we are poor and worthless creatures, yet can we say with David, "Although my house not be so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Twice God says by Isaiah, "I have given him for a covenant to the people" thrice happy are they who receive what God hath given, and who, in Christ, enter into that blessed bond. Beloved, if God has laid the promise home to you by the Spirit, and let you see it as a covenant promise, the God has borne this testimony to you: "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Thou art blessed now; thou shalt be blessed all thy life long on earth;

“And when through Jordan’s flood,
 Thy God shall bid thee go,
 His arm shall thee defend,
 And vanquish every foe;
 And in this covenant thou shalt view
 Sufficient strength to bear thee through.”

Further, the Lord bore testimony to Isaac *in secret manifestation*. He came to him in the watches of the night, and spake with him face to face. None but those who are the blessed of the Lord have such communion with him. “How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” asked Judas, not Iscariot, at the supper-table, before the Lord’s betrayal. Ah, Judas! It is simply because thou art not Iscariot, but a true disciple; else hadst thou never known intimately the presence of Christ. If he manifests himself to us in this choice manner, it is because he has blessed us in a way in which he would not bless the ungodly world. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.” Do you ever get manifestations of Christ? Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto you? Then thou hast a divine attestation that “thou art now the blessed of the Lord.”

Isaac also found this testimony, I think, *in divine acceptance of his worship*. We find that “he builded an altar,” and then he, “pitched his tent.” Keep up the altar of God in your home, and keep to the right order — the altar first, and the tent second. When God accepts you there, and makes your family altar to be a place of refreshment and delight to you, you will feel that in thus doing he is giving you the sweet assurance that you are now the blessed of the Lord. It is a pity that there are so many houses nowadays without roofs — I mean, houses of Christian people without family prayer. What are some of you at? If your children turn out ungodly, do you wonder at it, seeing that there is no morning and evening prayer, no reading of the Word of God in your home? In every home where the grace of God is known, there should be an altar, from which should rise the incense of praise, and at which the one sacrifice for sin should be pleaded before God day by day. In the midst of such family piety, which I fear is almost dying out in many quarters, you will get the witness, “Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.”

Isaac had another proof that he was blessed of God *in swift chastisement for sin*. He told a lie; he said that Rebekah was his sister, whereas she was his wife. Although that might seem to prove that he was not blessed of the Lord, the proof of his blessedness was that he was found out, and became ashamed of it. Worldly people may do wrong, and very likely get off scot-free; but if a Christian man goes off the straight line, he will have an accident in his roguery, and be found out; while other men may do ten times as badly, and never be suspected. Rascals who know not God, and who despise the ordinary morality of honest men, may speculate on the Stock Exchange with other peoples' money and never be found out; but if you who really love God only do it once, and say, "Well, I feel driven to it," you will be caught as surely as you live. It is one mark of a child of God, that when he does wrong, he gets a whipping. If I were in the street, and saw strange boys breaking windows, I would say, "Go home, or I will find a policeman for you." But if it were my own boy, I would chastise him myself. I would not meddle with the other boys; but with my own I would. So it is with God; who saith, by the mouth of Amos, to his people, "You only have I known for all of the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." It is a mark of God's blessing a man, that if the man does wrong, he cannot do it with impunity. Whenever your sins make you smart, thank God; for it is better to smart than it is to sin, and better that the smart should wean you from sin than that something sweet should come in to make you the slave of that sin forever.

Well, I will not dwell further on this. God testified to Isaac's heart, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." May he testify that to each one of you who know his name, and have received his covenant promises! May the words come to you like a benediction from the throne of God, and send you out to testify of his goodness, and to bless him who hath blessed us, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"!

III. Now, in the third place, I must draw your attention to the fact that, though Isaac was the blessed of the Lord, **THIS DID NOT SECURE HIM FROM TRIAL**. Already I have approached this part of my subject by speaking of the speedy discovery of his sin; but in addition to this, there were other sorrows not directly resulting from his own conduct, but

permitted by God in order that he, who was now blessed, should be still further enriched in character and conduct.

Even before Abimelech saw the source of Isaac's grace, he was "the blessed of the Lord"; yet *he still had to move about*. He was a pilgrim and a stranger, as was his father, and he lived as an alien in the land. He was without any inheritance in the country, and though his flocks and herds increased, he dwelt but in tents, while others reared for themselves stately houses and palaces. But God had prepared some better thing for him, and "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Thus, this trial became a means of blessing to him, as trials always do when sanctified by the Spirit of God. If these words reach any child of God whose nest on earth has been disturbed, whose house has been broken up, I would seek to cheer you by the thought of the "continuing city" which shall soon be your portion. If you have, through Christ, an assurance of an abundance entrance there, though you never have a house of your own on earth, and roam from place to place a stranger, seeming to be very often in the way of other people, yet remember that "thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Daily he doth load thee with benefits, and thou canst even now have thy home in his love.

"He loves, he knows, he cares,
Nothing *that* truth can dim;
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to him."

In spite of the position of blessedness in which Isaac was placed, *he had enemies to meet*. It is true that, at length, his foes became his friends; but the blessing of the Lord did not begin with their friendship; they then discovered and confessed the fact; but Isaac had been "the blessed of the Lord" all along. When Abimelech sent him away, and when "the herdsmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdsmen," he was not shut out from God's favour. Jehovah never bade him depart, nor took from him his good Spirit. So, tried heart, when foes press around thee, and one thing after another seems to go wrong, do not begin to write bitter things against thyself, as though God had forsaken thee. Remember that it is of the Lord that thou art blessed, and not of men. He will never forsake thee, and his deliverance shall soon make thy heart glad. Even in the midst of the trial, "thou art now the blessed of the Lord," and, like Isaac, after you have

drunk of the waters of “contention” and “hatred”, you will be brought to Rehoboth, where you shall have “room”, yea, even to Beer-sheba, “the well of the oath”, or “the seventh well”, “the well of satiety”, where your enemies shall seek your favour, and glorify your Lord.

Isaac had especially one trial that ate into his very soul; *he had domestic sorrow*. Esau’s double marriage with Hittite women was a grief to his father and to his mother; and I mention this because there may be some of God’s people who are suffering in the like way. I saw one, some days ago, who said, “I am like the Spartan who carried a fox in his bosom, that ate even to his heart, for I have a thankless, ungrateful child;” and, as he spoke to me, I saw the heart-break of the man. Ah! It may be that some of you are in that condition. If any young man or young woman here is causing that grief to a parent, I pray him or pray her to think of it. You are not heartless, I hope: you have not forgotten your mother’s prayers or your father’s care of you. Do not kill those who gave you being, or insult and vex those to whom you owe so much. But oh, dear brother or sister, if you have come here broken-hearted about your Esau, and all that he is doing, I want to take you by the hand and say, “But still thou art blessed of the Lord. Let this console thee.” What if Abraham has his Ishmael? Yet God blessed him. Bear bravely this trial. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Give God no rest, day or night, till he save thy boy, and bring back thy girl. But still, be not despairing; be not cast down; for it is true of thee — and drink in, I pray thee, this cup of consolation — that “thou art now the blessed of the Lord.”

Let me speak two or three earnest words in closing. “Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.” “Now.” Beloved, do labour to get a hold of a present blessing. If you are indeed saved, do not be always thinking of what you are to enjoy in heaven; but seek to be the blessed of the Lord now. Why not have two heavens, a heaven here and a heaven there? What is the difference between a believer’s life here and a believer’s life there? Only this: here Christ is with us, and there we are with Christ. If we live up to our privileges this is the only difference we need to know. Try to be “now the blessed of the Lord.” I have heard of a traveller who was followed by a beggar, in Ireland, who very importunately asked for alms. As long as there seemed a chance of getting anything, the old woman kept saying, “May the blessing of God follow your honour all through your life!” but when all

hope of a gift was vanished, she bitterly added, “and never overtake you.” But the blessings which God has for his chosen are not of that slow-footed kind which never catch us up. It is written, “All these blessings shall come on thee, and *overtake thee*, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.” I beseech you, then, to lay hold of this overtaking blessing. Let it not pass unheeded. “Thou art *now* the blessed of the Lord.”

Next, be very grateful that you are in this position of grace. You might have been in the drink-shop, you might have been speaking infidelity, you might have been in prison, you might have been in hell. But “thou art now the blessed of the Lord.” Wherefore, praise the Lord, whose mercy endureth for ever. If you do not lift up your voice, yet lift up your heart, and bless him for the grace which hath made you to differ from other people.

Again, tell others about it. If “thou art now the blessed of the Lord,” communicate to others the sacred secret that has been the means of bringing such joy to thee. Are we earnest enough about the souls of others? Christian men and women, do you love your fellow-creatures, or do you not? How few there are of us who make it our business to be constantly telling out the sweet story of Jesus and his love! I read, the other day, of a chaplain in the Northern army in the lamentable war in the United States, who, while he lay wounded on the battle-field, heard a man, not far off, utter an oath. Though he himself was so badly wounded that he could not stand, yet he wished to reach the swearer to speak a gospel message to him, and he thought, “I can get to him if I roll over.” So, though bleeding profusely himself, he kept rolling over and over till he got to the side of the poor blasphemer, and on the lone battle-field he preached to him Jesus. Some of the other men came along, and he said to them, “Can you carry me? I fear that I am dying, but I do not want to be taken off the field. I should like you, if you would, to carry me from one dying man to another, all the night long, that I might tell them of a Saviour.” What a splendid deed was this! A bleeding man talking to those who were full of sin about a Saviour’s bleeding wounds! Oh, you who have no wound, who can walk, and possess all the faculties to fit you for the service, how often you miss opportunities and refuse to speak of Jesus! “Thou art now the blessed of the Lord,” and at this moment I would have you think that the blessed Lord lays his pierced hand on thee saying, “Go and tell others what I have

done for thee." Never cease to tell the divine tale, as opportunity is given, until thy voice is lost in death; then thy spirit shall begin to utter the story in the loftier sphere.

You are coming to the Lord's table, and I invite you, beloved, to come here with much love. Do not come with doubts and fears, with a cold or lukewarm heart. Remember "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." Come, eat his flesh, and drink his blood. There, on the table, thou wilt see nothing but the embers of his flesh and blood; but if thou believest, Christ will feed thee spiritually upon himself, and as thou dost eat that bread of heaven, and drink that wine of life, thou mayest well hear a voice saying, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord."

Well do I remember the time when I would have given away my eyes to be as a dog under the table, to have eaten only the crumbs which fell, as others feasted, and now for forty-and-one years to-day I have sat as a child at the table, blessed be his name!

As I told our friends this morning, this day is an anniversary of peculiar interest to me. Forty-and-one years ago I went down into the river, and was baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

"Yet have been upheld till now:
Who could hold me up but thou?"

May you, each of you, as you come to the table, hear a voice saying in your heart, "Now a believer; now justified; now quickened; now regenerate; now in Christ; now dear to the heart of God. 'Thou art now the blessed of the Lord.'"

Oh, that some who came in here without the blessing would get it before they go! He that believeth in Jesus hath all the blessing which Jesus can give to him; forgiveness for the past; grace for the present; and glory for the future. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," is the word of the Lord to thee, thou doubter. He was made a curse for thee, that he might redeem thee from the curse of the broken law, for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." He hung on a tree for guilty man. Believe thou in him, and as thou believest, eternal joys shall come streaming down into thy dry and desolate heart, and it shall be said

to thee, "Thou art now the blessed of the Lord." You shall be blessed now, and blessed for evermore! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Genesis 26

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 758, 757, 786.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

Dear Friends, — I have received letters from readers who speak of reading *with interest* the notes at the end of the sermons. I feared that these jottings had become monotonous, and therefore I am amazed that they should interest so many. I am not able, like Paganini, to discourse sweet music on a single string; and therefore I impute the *interest* spoken of the love of the reader rather than to the genius of the writer. We are always interested in the smallest details of the lives of those we greatly love.

This present note may record the fact that on the last evening of 1891, and in the morning of New Year's Day, 1892, I gave two short addresses to about a dozen friends in this hotel. My silence of more than half a year is ending. The chirping of the first spring birds is heard in my land. It is true that I sat down, and talked my little piece, and that I felt glad when it came to an end; but still it has been done, and be that was almost numbered with the dead is now beginning to speak in the ears of the living.

These two little talks, only of interest to my friends, will probably be preserved in *The Sword and the Trowel* for February, for Mr. Harrald took them down in shorthand. You will all guess how happy I am, for I have now some signs and tokens of returning strength; and I am praising God with all my heart for such a wonderful restoration.

To friends who have lovingly kept up the funds for the various institutions, I send my heartiest thanks, and to all well-wishers my kindest regards.

Yours to serve till death,

C.H. SPURGEON.

HOTEL BEAU RIVAGE, MENTON,

January 2, 1892.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

IS GOD IN THE CAMP?

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, January 17th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, April 9th, 1891.

“And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore”

— 1 Samuel 4:7

Israel was out of gear with God. The people had forgotten the Most High, and had gone aside to the worship of Baal. They had neglected the things of God; therefore they were give up to their enemies. When Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt, he instructed them how they were to live in the land to which he would bring them, and warned them that if they forsook him they would be chastened. His words were very plain: “If ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.” In fulfillment of this threatening, the Philistines had been divinely permitted to make great havoc of the idolatrous Israelites, and to hold them in cruel slavery.

The only way for them to get out of their trouble was to return to God, who, by his judgments, seemed to say. “Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.” The only cure for their hurt was to go back with repentance,

and renew their faith and their covenant with God. Then all would have been right. But this is the last thing that men will do. Our minds, by nature, love not spiritual things. We will attend to any outward duty, or to any external rite; but to bring our hearts into subjection to the divine will, to bow our minds to the Most High, and to serve the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, the natural man abhors. Yet nothings less than this will suffice to turn our captivity.

Instead of attempting to get right with God, these Israelites set about devising superstitious means of securing the victory over their foes. In this respect most of us have imitated them. We think of a thousand inventions; but we neglect the one thing needful. I may be addressing some who, at this time, are passing through sore trial, and who therefore think that they must have forgotten some little thing in connection with the external religion, instead of seeing that it matters little what outward observance they may neglect, so long as they do not possess the faith, without which it is impossible to please God. They forgot the main matter, which is to enthrone God in the life, and to seek to do his will by faith in Christ Jesus. Get right with God; confess thy sin; believe in Jesus Christ, the appointed Saviour; be reconciled to God by the death of his Son; then all will be right between thee and the Father in heaven. We cannot bring men to this, apart from the Spirit of God.

In this sermon I shall have to show you how often, and in how many ways, men seek other methods of cure than the only one, namely, to take the case to God. They heal their hurt slightly. They cry, "Peace! Peace!" where there is no peace, and adopt a thousand devious devices rather than accept the only remedy provided by the Great Physician for sin-sick souls. Instead of seeking to become right with God, these Israelites thought that, if they could get the ark of the covenant, which had been the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and bring it from the tent of Shiloh into the midst of their camp, they would then be certain of victory. So they sent and fetched the ark; and when it came into the camp, they were enthusiastic as if their banners already waved over a victorious; they lifted up their voices so loudly, that the earth rang again with their shouts, while the Philistines, hearing their exulting shout, and finding out the reason, were greatly afraid. With fearful hearts, and trembling lips, already counting that all was lost,

their enemies turned to one another, and said, "God has come into the camp. Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore."

In considering this subject, we will think, first, of *the great mistake* which both Israel and the Philistines made. In the second place, we will consider *the great truth* of which their mistake was a caricature. God *does* come into the camp when his people go forth to fight in his name; and when he really comes, the tide of battle is turned. When I have spoken on these two things, I shall close, as God shall help me, by speaking upon *the great lessons* which lie almost upon the very surface of the narrative.

I. First, then, let us consider THE GREAT MISTAKE which both Israelites and Philistines made. The Israelites, instead of seeing to God himself, went to Shiloh to fetch the ark of the covenant. The ark was the sacred place where God revealed himself in the days when his people truly served him; but it was devoid of power, without the presence of him who dwelt between the cherubim. The Israelites were mistaken, for they shouted long before they were "out of the wood." Before they had won any victory, the sight of the ark made them boastful and confident. The Philistines fell into an error of a different kind, for they were frightened without any real cause. They said, "God has come into the camp;" whereas God had not come at all. It was only the ark with the cherubim upon it; God was not there.

The mistake they made was just this: *they mistook the visible for the invisible*. It has pleased God, even in our holy faith, to give us some external symbols — water, and bread, and wine. They are so simple, that it does seem, at first sight, as if men could never have made them objects of worship, or used them as instruments of a kind of witchcraft. One would have thought that these symbols would only have been like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle. Through which men would behold the Saviour, and draw near to him. Instead thereof, some have neither looked through the windows nor passed through the gates, but have ascribed to the gates and the windows that which is only to be found in him who is behind them both. It is sad, indeed, when the symbol takes the place of the Saviour! Man is by nature both an atheist and an idolater. These are two shades of the same thing. We want, if we do worship at all, something that we can see. But a God that can be seen is no God; and so the idolater is first cousin to the atheist. He has a God which is no God, for he cannot be

a God if he can be apprehended by human senses. This ark of the covenant, which was but a chest of wood covered with gold, with angelic figures on the lid, was simply a token of the presence of God with his people; and these Israelites transformed it into a sacred object, to be highly revered, to be worshipped, and, as it appears, to be trusted in. The elders said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when *it* cometh among us, *it* may save us out of the hand of our enemies." They ascribed to the ark what could only be done by God himself. This is the tendency of us all. Anything which we can see, we pine after. Hence we lean upon the arm of flesh: we trust in man, though it is written plainly enough, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Yet, still we want some symbol, some token, something before our eyes; and if it can be something artistic, so much the better. We lay hold of something beautiful, that will charm the eye, and produce a kind of sensuous feeling, and straightway we mistake our transient emotion for spiritual worship and true reverence. This is the great mistake that many still make; they think that God has come into the camp merely because some outward religious rite or ceremony has been observed, or because some sacred shrine has been set up among them.

These Israelites fell into another mistake, which is also often made to-day: *they preferred office to character*. In their distress, instead of calling upon God, they sent for Hophni and Phinehas. Why did their hearts turn to them? Simply because they were priests, and the people had come to hold the sacred office in such superstitious reverence that they thought that was everything. But these young men were sinners against the Lord exceedingly; they were not even moral men, much less were they spiritual men. They made the house of God to be abhorred, and dishonored the Lord before all Israel. Yet, because they happened to hold the office of the priesthood, they were put in the place of God. Dear friends, this is a kind of feeling which many indulge. They think they shall be saved if they have a Levite for their priest. They imagine that the worship of God must be conducted properly, because the man who conducts it is in the apostolic succession, and has been duly ordained. You shall see a man eminent for the holiness of his life, for the disinterestedness of his character, for the fidelity of his preaching, for his power in prayer, for the blessing that rests upon his ministry in the conversion of sinners; but he is counted a mere

nobody, because he lacks the superstitious qualification which deluded men think is so necessary. Here are Hophni and Phinehas, two of the grossest sinners in all the land of Israel; but then, you see, they are in the line of Aaron, and so they are trusted, and indeed are put in the place of God. Now, God forbid that we should say a word against the house of Aaron, or against any who speak the name of the Lord, whom God has truly called unto his work! But, beloved, this work is not a mere matter of pedigree; it is a question of the abiding presence of God with man and in a man. Unless God be with the minister whom you hear, to what purpose do you listen? If the leader of the church be not one who walks with God, where will he lead you? "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." The blind man may wear a badge on his arm to show that he is a certified guide; but will you be saved from the ditch simply because he belongs to the order of guides, and has his certification with him? Be not led away by any such vain notion. Yet this is the error into which many have fallen in all ages of the church.

But these people who faced the Philistines made another mistake; *they confounded enthusiasm with faith*. When they saw the ark, they shouted so that the earth rang again. "These are the kind of people I like," says one, "people that can shout." If that is all you want, why do you not go among the bulls of Bashan, and make your home in the midst of them? They can make more noise than any mortal men can make. These Israelites shouted, but there was nothing in their noise, any more than there is in their modern imitators. Anyone who has passed the camp of Israel, that day, might have said that they had "a bright, cheerful, happy service; just the kind of service the people like, you know, nothing dull about it." Hark! How the glad sound rises! Surely these people must have great faith! No, they had not a scrap of the real article. They were under a mistake all the time; and, shout as they might, they had very little to shout about; for in a short time their carcasses strewed the plain. The Philistines put an end to their shouting. Now, beloved, when you are worshipping God, shout if you are filled with holy gladness. If the ejaculation comes from your heart, I would not ask you to restrain it. God forbid that we should judge any man's worship! But do not be so foolish as to suppose that because there is loud noise there must also be faith. Faith is a still water, it floweth deep. True faith in God may express itself with leaping and shouting; and it is a happy thing when it does: but it also sit still before the Lord, and that

perhaps is a happier thing still. Praise can sit silent on the lip, and yet be heard in heaven. There is a passion of the heart, too deep for words. There are feelings that break the backs of words; the mind staggers and trembles beneath the weight of them. Frost of the mouth often comes with thaw of the soul; and when the heart's great deeps are breaking up, it sometimes happens that the mouth is not large enough to let the torrents flow, and so it has to be comparatively silent. Do not, therefore, make the mistake of confounding enthusiasm with faith in judging the externals of worship, else you may fall into a thousand blunders. He may worship God who shouts till the earth rings again, and God may accept him; but he may worship God as truly who sits in silence before the Most High, and says not even a word. It is the spiritual worship which is most acceptable to God, not the external in any form or shape. It is the heart that has fellowship with the Lord; and it needs little in the way of expressing itself, neither has God tied it down to this way or that. It may find its own methods of utterance so long as it is truly "moved by the Holy Ghost."

Another mistake these people made that day was this: *they valued novelty above Scriptural order*. "The Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore." The Israelites probably made the same mistake, fixing their hope on this new method of fighting the Philistines, which they hoped would bring them victory. We are all so apt to think that the new plan of going to work will be much more effective than those that have become familiar; but it is not so. It is generally a mistake to exchange old lamps for new. "There hath not been such a thing heretofore." There is a glamour about the novelty which misleads us, and we are liable to think the newer is the truer. If there has not such a thing heretofore, some people will take to it at once for that very reason. "Oh," says the man who is given up to change, "that is the thing for me!" But it is probably not the thing for a true-hearted and intelligent Christian, for if, "there hath not been such a thing heretofore," it is difficult to explain, if the thing be a good one, why the Holy Ghost, who has been with the people of God since Pentecost, and who came to lead us into all truth, has not led the Church of God to this before. If your new discovery is the mind of God, where has the Holy Scriptures been all these centuries? Believing in the infallible Word and the abiding Spirit, I rather suspect your novelty; at least I cannot say that I endorse it until I have tested it by the Word of God.

“Oh, but we had such a meeting! There never was the like of it,” you say. Probably you ought to pray that there may never be the like of it again, for, after all, the meetings in which hearts become broken before God, and in which men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the same Saviour who saved their forefathers, who have entered into glory, are no novelty. Those meetings in which men come and give themselves up to God, where “the great transaction” is done, where they become the Lord’s, and he becomes theirs, are very old-fashioned things; they have been heretofore. “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old:” and if we could only see the like, we would not ask to be able to say, “There hath not been such a thing heretofore.” Philistines may like a thing that has not been heretofore; but we like the thing that has been since the days of Pentecost, the things that come from him who is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever”: the workings of that God who changes not, “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Let him work his blessed will; and if he chooses to send a new thing on the earth, we will glorify his name; but because there are new things in the world, we will not ascribe them to him, for they may come from quite another quarter/ We remember that “Lo, here is Christ, or there!” was the cry against which our Lord warned his disciples. Concerning such a cry the Saviour said, “Believe it or not.” To you, dear friends, I would say — Stand fast by your great Leader, the blessed, unchangeable Christ, and by the faith once for all delivered to the saints, or else you will be on the road to a thousand blunders.

The mistake made on that battle-field is a mistake which nowadays is frequently imitated. It assumes many forms. We fall into their error when we *confound ritual and spirituality*. Now, every form of religion has its ritual. The Quaker, who sits still, and does not say a word, has a ritual so far; and he that has a thousand rites and ceremonies has a ritual so much farther. But if I have gone through the general routine of the worship of my church, and then think that I have done something acceptable to God, while yet my heart has not communed with him in humble repentance, or faith, or love, or joy, or consecration, I make a great mistake. You may keep on with your religious performances for seventy years or more; you may never miss what our Scotch friends call “a diet of worship”; you may not neglect a single rubric in the whole ritual; but it is all nothing unless the soul has fellowship with God. Godliness is a spiritual thing; for “God is a

Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” So far as our forms or worship help us towards this spiritual communion, they are good, but no farther. “Oh, well!” says one, “I never worship beneath a cathedral roof; I am quite content to meet with a few friends in a barn.” Do not suppose, my friend, that the meagreness of your accessories has necessarily secured true worship. I thou hast met God in the barn, it is well; and if thy brother has met God in the right spirit, I care but little for thy barn, and I care even less for his cathedral. What does signify how thou hast garnished thine offering if it be not a living sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ? A dead thing must not be brought to the altar of God. Remember that, under the Jewish law, they never offered fish upon the altar, because they could not bring it there alive. Everything brought to God as a sacrifice must be alive. Its blood must be poured out warm at the altar’s foot. Oh that you and I might feel that lifting of the soul to God, and that buoyancy of heart, which true spiritual worship alone can bring to us! May our ritual, whether we have much or little, be our guide to God, and not our chain to hold us back from God!

We fall into the same blunder that the Israelites and the Philistines made is we *consider orthodoxy to be salvation*. We have secured much that is worth keeping when we have, intellectually and intelligently, laid hold on that divinely-revealed truth, “the gospel of the grace of God”; but we have not obtained everything even then. O sirs, if it were possible for you to believe every word of Christ’s teaching, if it were possible to hold with only an intellectual faith the teaching of the apostles, rejecting all besides, and to hold it with an accuracy so great that in no joy or tittle you had made a mistake, it would profit you nothing; for “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He may understand these things so as to be a theologian, but he must have them wrought into his soul by the Holy Ghost so as to make him a saint, or else he has not really understood them at all. Unless these are thy meat and thy drink, they are nothing to thee; unless thou findest Christ in them, thou wilt find in them thy ruin, they shall be the “saviour of death” unto thee. Remember, it was a beautiful tomb in which the dead Christ was laid; but he left it, and there was nothing there but grave-clothes after he had gone; and, in like manner, the best-constructed system of theology, if it has not Christ in it, and if he who holds it be not himself spiritually alive, is nothing more than a tomb in which are trappings for the dead. It is nothing better than a gilded ark,

without the presence of God; and although you may shout, and say, “God is come into the camp,” it will not be so.

We fall into the same error if we *regard routine as security*, and think that, because we have often done a thing, and have not suffered for it, therefore it will always be well with us. We are all such creatures of habit that, at length, our repeated actions seem to be natural and right. Because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. But though Pompeii may slumber long at the foot of Vesuvius, at length it is overwhelmed. It behooves every one of us to try our ways and specially to call in question things which have become a sort of second nature to us. This is the fault of which Peter gives warning concerning the scoffers of the last days, who will say with regret to the blessed truth of Christ’s second advent, “Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” The apostle says of such that, “they willingly are ignorant,” and therefore are they willfully ignorant of the terrible and unalterable doom that awaits them at the coming of their Judge.

Thus, like the Israelites, we may shout as we see the ark of the covenant, although our sins have driven the Lord far from us; or, like the Philistines, we may say, “God has come into the camp,” and yet he may not be there at all in the sense in which they meant. Thus I might continue to illustrate my text; but time would fail me, and I have yet to speak upon two other points.

II. Having considered the great mistake these people made, I will draw your attention, in the second place, to THE GREAT TRUTH of which their mistake is caricature. Though what the Philistines said, and what the Israelites thought, on this occasion, was false, it is often true. God does come to the camp of his people, and his presence is the great power of his church. O Brethren, what joy comes to us at such a time! I will briefly sketch the scene that takes place when God comes into the camp.

Then, *the truth of the gospel becomes vital*. The doctrines of grace have then with them the grace of the doctrines. Then is Christ not only to us the Truth, but he is also the Way and the Life. The gospel then becomes a sword with two edges, and it does marvelous execution. The Word of God

then shows itself to be both a hammer and a fire, smiting and melting those upon whom its power is proved. Whoever preaches the gospel, when God has come into the camp, speaks with power. He may have little eloquence, and less learning; but if God is with him, and if his heart is all aglow with divine love, he will speak with power, and the people will say, "Surely, God is in this place, and we know it."

When God comes into the camp, *new life is put into prayer*. Instead of the repetition of holy phrases in a cold, feeble, lifeless fashion, the soul empties itself out before the Lord, like water flowing from a fountain; and men and women cry mightily unto him, laying hold upon the horns of the altar; and they come away with both hands full of heaven's own blessing, for they have prevailed with God in mighty wrestling.

By the presence of God in the camp *fresh energy is thrown into service*. There is a way of serving the Lord in which men do the proper thing while they are fast asleep. I am afraid much of our service for God is done while we are asleep, and that it is accompanied by a kind of celestial snoring, instead of being performed when our spiritual faculties are all alert, and the whole man is wide awake. But when God comes into the camp, how he shakes men up, and awakens the slumberers from their dreams! What a quickening, what a vivifying, the presence of God gives! I remember a picture on the Continent that strangely represents the resurrection. Some of the people, who are pictured as being raised from the dead, have some of their bones coming together; others have their heads covered with flesh, but the rest of the body is a skeleton; and nothing seems complete in this strange, wild conception of a mad artist. But there are hundred of Christian people who seem to be spiritually in as incomplete a stage as those people were supposed to be. They are, I hope, quickened from the dead, but they are not yet fully alive into God. Some of them are still dead in their head; their intellect has not yet been sanctified: some of them are dead at their hands; they cannot get them into their pockets, or if they manage so much as that, they cannot get them out again: some of them are dead at heart, they seem to know things very well with the brain, but not to feel them in the soul. But when the Lord comes to us with power, he makes us alive all over; every part of the man is quickened with a divine energy; then men really work for Jesus, and work successfully, too.

When God comes into the camp, his presence *convinces unbelievers*. Sinners turn to the Lord on the right hand, and on the left, in so marvellous a way that our weak faith is often quite astonished. The last persons in the world that we expected to be converted, come to our services, and there find Christ; and many have been hearers for years, but seem harder than the lower millstone, become soft as wax to the divine Word. When God comes into the camp, the Holy Ghost convinces men “of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment”, the arrows of conviction fly fast and far, and pierce the hearts of the foemen of the King, and the slain of the Lord are many.

The presence of God, moreover, *comforts mourners*. When God comes into the camp, those who are troubled and tried begin to wipe away the tears of sorrow, and feel strengthened to bear their burdens; or, better still, they cast their care on him who is so manifestly near. Our hearts are also cheered by seeing anxious sinners turn their eyes towards the cross of Christ. Then Jesus reveals his love to them, and they perceive it; they fly into his arms, and find salvation there. Oh, what joyful times we have had of late in talking with many who have yielded themselves to Christ, and taken him to be all their salvation, and all their desire! May God stay in the camp with us till every sinner that comes within our ranks, and many also who are outside, shall come to Jesus, and be saved!

When God is in the camp, his presence *infuses daring faith*. Feeble men begin to grow vigorous, young men dream dreams and old men see visions. Many begin to plot and plan something for Jesus which, in their timid days, they would never have thought of attempting. Others reach a height of consecration that seems to verge on imprudence. Alabaster boxes get broken, and the precious ointment is poured out upon the Master’s head, even though Judas shakes his money-bag, and cries, “To what purpose is this waste?” Adventurers for God are raised up — men like the Portuguese navigators, who passed the Cape of Storms, and called it afterwards the Cape of Good Hope. Men begin to mission the slums, the lodging-houses, the dark streets, and after a while those very places become happy hunting grounds for other Christian workers. Because God is in the camp, many take up the work which at first only the truly brave believer dared to try.

The fact of God being in the camp cannot be hidden, for in a delightful way it *distills joy into worship*. People do not think sermons dull when God is

in the camp; and prayer-meetings are not then called “stupid affairs.” The saints enjoy fellowship with one another; and when Christian people meet each other, and God is in the camp, they have many a happy word to exchange concerning their Master. Many such seasons we have enjoyed. It has been with us as with the people mentioned by the prophet Malachi: “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” They had such holy talk that God himself turned eaves-dropper to listen to what they had to say; he liked it so well that he put it down; and he thought so much of it that he said he would preserve it; and a book of remembrances was made for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. May there be many more such books of remembrance in our day!

I cannot tell you what innumerable blessings come to the camp of the spiritual Israel when God is there. I hope that we know a little of this even now; and I am sure we want to know a great deal more of it. It is hard work preaching when God is not in the camp. It must be slavery to teach in the Sunday-school when God is not in the camp. And any of you seeking souls must have a heavy drag on your spirits when the Lord is away. We might pray on Sabbath mornings, indeed, every day, and before every duty, “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence;” but if the Lord be in the camp, then the wheels no longer drag heavily, but, like the chariots of Amminadib, we fly before the wind. Everything is done gladly, happily, thankfully, believingly, when “God is come into the camp.” May he abide in our midst, and may our eyes be opened to see him!

“Thrice blest is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is in the field, when he
Is most invisible.”

III. Now, in closing our meditations upon this passage, let us try to learn THE GREAT LESSONS which this incident teaches us.

The first lesson is that which I have been insisting upon all through: *the necessity of the divine presence*. Dear friends, you acknowledge this. There is not one among us who does not know that the Holy Ghost is needful to

effect any work. But I am afraid that it is something which we know so well, that we have put it up on a shelf, and there it lies unheeded. But it must not be so with thee, my brother, nor with me. We must pray in the Holy Ghost, or else we shall not pray at all; and we must preach under the influence of the Holy Ghost, or else we shall chatter like sparrows on the window-sill in the morning, and nothing will come of the chattering. Only the Holy Ghost can make anything we do to be effectual. Therefore never begin any work without the Holy Ghost, and do not dare go on with the impetus that you have gained, but cry again for the Holy Spirit. The “amen” of the sermon needs to be spoken in the power of the Holy Ghost just as much as the first word of the discourse, and every word between the first and the last. Let all your service for God be in the Spirit, or else it is all good for nothing.

Learn, next, that *we should do all we can to obtain the presence of God in the camp*. If there are any preparations which we can make for his coming, let us set about them at once. You who are out of Christ must not think that there is anything for *you* to do before you receive Christ. All the doing has been done.

“Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.”

But I am now addressing the people of God, and if we would have God to come very nigh to us, we must prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight in the desert a highway for our God. What can we do to obtain the presence of God in our midst? My time has so far gone that I can only give you a few hints as to what we ought to do if we want to secure that end.

We must confess our helplessness without God, and honestly mean the confession. The first thing that is required of us is to bemoan the fact that, by and of ourselves, we can do nothing; even as our Lord said to his disciples, “Without me ye can do nothing.” The sooner we recognize this truth, the better. Our half-doing is our undoing; but when we cease from self, then we make way for God.

We must, next, have a universal desire for the presence of God with us. I mean by that, that every Christian man and every Christian woman must agonize with God that he would come into the camp; not merely some few

of us desiring it, but all of us vehemently crying unto the Lord, “Come, Lord, and tarry not.”

We must also be very careful in our lives. God will not come to an unholy church. The sacred Dove will never come to a foul nest. There must be a purging and a cleansing, or else he will not come.

Moreover, there must be a conscientious obedience to his word, a strict adherence to his truth, his doctrine, his precepts, to the whole of Christ’s rule and law. He will not prosper us unless we are careful to follow every step that he has taken. God help us to have this conscientious care, this coming out from those who may not be thus careful, according to his word. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

If we desire this special sense of God’s presence, there must be unbroken union. The Spirit of God does not love fighting. He is a dove, and he will not come where there is constant strife. We must be as one man in our love to one another. It was when the disciples were “with one accord in one place” that the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost; and thus it is in all our Pentecostal seasons. Often a stone seems to lie at the well’s-mouth of our choicest blessings; and it cannot be rolled away “until the flocks be gathered together.”

To crown all, there must be a hearty reliance upon God, and a childlike confidence in him. I would recommend you either believe in God up to the hilt, or else not believe at all. Believe this Book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing-place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith, and is not good for much. Oh, I pray you, do believe in God, and his omnipotence!

Such are the conditions of obtaining the blessing of God’s abiding presence. If these things be in us and abound, we shall be able to shout without making any mistake about the matter, “God has come into the camp.”

When God does come to us, *we should seek by all means to retain his presence*. How can this boon be secured?

First, by humble walking with God. If we grow proud because we are honoured by our King's company, and begin to think that there must be, after all, something in us to attract God to us, and cause his face to shine upon us, we shall not long have the Lord among us. Seek, then, to be lowly in his presence.

Next, let much grateful praise be given to him from loyal hearts. If God is saving sinners, let us give him the glory of it. If he is at work among us, let us not go and talk about what we have been doing; but let us tell to men and angels, too, what HE has done. Let us never dare to handle God's jewels as if they were our own.

Moreover, there must be perpetual watchfulness. If God be with us, he may give us a great victory, and yet to-morrow we may be defeated because Achan has hidden the goodly Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold. Unless we are sober and vigilant, we may sadly have to mourn that the Lord has withdrawn his presence from us. There is a fierce light that beats around his throne. "Our God is a consuming fire." Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? The Scriptural answer is, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly." May God make us men of such calibre as can endure that heat!

And lastly, there must be an individual fellowship with God on the part of each one of us. It is hard work for the whole church to walk with God every day and all the day; but if each member will see to it that his own personal life is right, the church, as a whole, need fear nothing. Let us each one look after his own life, and see that all is right there; then the life of the church will soon be at flood-tide, and when we go forth to the battle, the Philistines will know of a truth that "God is come into the camp." May God speedily raise us all up to this point of personal consecration!

Dear friends, we are having sinners saved in our midst; pray for them. Some are struggling towards the light; seek to help them. If you meet with any such, love them, and cherish them, as a father does his child. I cannot speak longer. Your hearts must tell you what to do. Go on serving the Lord. May he abide with us in power for evermore! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE THE SERMON —

1 Samuel 4

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 968, 448, 992

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

BELOVED FRIENDS, — The one want of the church in these times is indicated by the title of this sermon. The presence of God, in saving power, in the church, will put to end the present plague of infidelity. Men will not doubt his Word when they feel his Spirit. It will be the only security for the success of the missionary effort. If God be with his people, they will soon see crowds converted and added to the church. For a thousand reasons, we need that Jehovah should come into the camp, as aforetime he visited and delivered his people from bondage in Egypt.

Could we not all unite in prayer for this as fervently as all united in prayer for my life? It is a far greater and more necessary subject for intercession, and the Lord will not be slow to hear us. Come to thy church, O Lord, in fulness of power to save! If the Great Advent is not yet, indulge us with outpourings of grace and times of refreshing!

Oh, that all Christendom would take us this pleading, and continue it until the answer came!

Receive, dear readers, my hearty salutations. Personally, I scarcely make progress during this broken weather; but the doctor says I hold my own, and that is more than he could have expected. Whether I live or die, I would say, in the words of Israel to Joseph, “God shall be with you.”

Yours ever heartily,

C.H. SPURGEON.

MENTON, Jan 9, 1892.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

A CHALLENGE AND A SHIELD

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, January 24th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-Day Evening, August 24th, 1890.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.”

— Romans 8:34

Here are two very wonderful challenges thrown out by the apostle Paul. First, he boldly defies anyone to charge the chosen of God with sin: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” and then, even if any charges should be brought against them, he defies all our foes to secure an adverse verdict: “Who is he that condemneth?” This would be a very bold challenge even for a man who had been righteous from his youth up. If there had been a man, in the history of the world, who from his infancy had known God, and who had grown up serving him, devoting himself entirely to the cause of the Lord Christ; and if he had kept the commandments without fail, as far as man could judge, it would be a very hazardous thing even for him to say. “Who is he that condemneth?” For human righteousness is only human; being human, it is finite; and, being finite, it falls short somewhere or other. The best of men are but men at the best; to be a man is to be a fallen creature, and being fallen creatures, we cannot of ourselves perfectly please the thrice-holy Jehovah. In many things we all offend.

The man who uttered this challenge, “Who is he that condemneth?” and uttered it under the inspiration of God, did not, however, occupy the position of a sinless man. His early years had been spent in opposition to his Saviour. He had been exceedingly mad against the disciples of Christ, and had persecuted them even unto strange cities. In another place he calls himself the very chief of sinners; and yet it is this man who dares to ask the question, “Who is he that condemneth?” It is a bold, brave challenge; but it never could have been uttered by Paul if it had not been accompanied by the next sentence, “It is Christ that dies.” First, he flings down the gauntlet, and challenges a battle, crying, “Who is he that condemneth?” And then he holds up a shield so broad that he is completely concealed behind it, and every enemy is defeated in the conflict, because “It is Christ that dies.” Happy shall you and I be if, though covered with sin, though guilty and unclean, we nevertheless shall have faith to believe in the Christ that dies, a faith so strong, and confident that we shall dare to stand both now, and at the judgment-seat of Christ, and say, “Who is he that condemneth?” May we have this faith on our dying bed, when the pulse is faint and feeble, and heart and flesh begin to fail! May we still, between the very jaws of death, have solid confidence in God, and dare to ask for the presence of men and devils, too, “Who is the that condemneth?” being made bold to do so because we have believed in the Christ that died.

Paul has, in this case, only one answer to the question, “Who is he that condemneth?” He meets it by the blessed fact that “It is Christ that died.” I recommend that we should, each one of us, have but one hope of salvation. As long as we have half-a-dozen, we have half-a-dozen doubtful ones: but when it comes to only one, and that such a sufficient one as the truth that “It is Christ that died,” we have a well-founded hope, in which we may rest with confidence. Such a hope as this is “an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast”; and the man who has this anchor on board the barque of his life can never suffer spiritual shipwreck. When the Emperor Charles the Fifth went to war with Francis the First, King of Naples, he sent a herald to him, declaring war in the name of the Emperor of Germany, King of Castille, King of Aragon, King of Naples, King of Sicily, and he went on with many more titles, giving his sovereign all the honours that were his due. When the herald of Francis the First took up the gage of battle, he would not be outdone in the list of honours, so he said, “I take up the challenge in the name of Francis the First, King of France; Francis

the First, King of France; Francis the First, King of France; Francis the First, King of France; Francis the First, King of France.” He just repeated his master’s name and office as many times as the other gentleman had titles. So it is a grand thing, whenever Satan comes and begins to accuse you, just to say, “Christ has died, Christ has died.” If any confront you with other confidences, still keep you to this almighty please, “Christ has died.” If one says, “I was christened, and confirmed,” answer him by saying, “Christ has died.” Should another say, “I was baptized an adult,” let your confidence remain the same: “Christ has died.” When another says, “I am a sound, orthodox Presbyterian,” you stick to this solid ground, “Christ has died.” And if still another says, “I am a red-hot Methodist,” answer him in the self-same way: “Christ has died.” Whatever may be the confidences of others, and whatever may be your own, put them all away, and keep to this one declaration, “It is Christ that died.” There is enough in that one truth to include all that is excellent in the others, and to answer all the accusations that may be brought against you. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” I would put the trumpet to my lips while I preach, and sound out this one note, praying that it may be a death-blast to all accusations that can be brought against believers in Christ.

I want you to notice that Paul does not even rest his confidence as to the believers’ safety upon the fact that they are able to say, “We have trusted in Christ; we have loved Christ; we have served Christ.” He allows nothing to mar the glory of this one blessed fact, “It is Christ that died.” If he adds anything at all, it is still something about that same Christ — “yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

This is a subject upon which I delight to speak; for here is all my hope and confidence. In these words I see first, *a challenge to all comers*: “Who is he that condemneth?” Secondly, I see here, *a remedy for all sin*. If any take up the gage of battle, and say, “We condemn you,” we shall have this for our complete answer to every one, “It is Christ that died.” And lastly, I see here, *an answer to every accusation* arising from sin. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.”

I. Here is A CHALLENGE TO ALL COMERS. By the grace of God, the apostle stands defiantly in the midst of all the believer’s foes, and flings

down the gauntlet before them all. The encounter to which he challenges them is not to be a mere tilt in a tournament, but a battle for life or death. Who enters the lists against the believer? First comes Satan; then the world; then conscience; and last of all the law of God. Over them all the believer triumphs. "It is Christ that died," becomes both his sword and his shield; and when the dread conflict is over, and even while it is raging, he sings, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The first who takes up the believer's challenge is *Satan*. Some do not believe in the personality of the devil; but I am as sure of it as I am of the personality of his children who deny their own father. Those of us who have passed through any spiritual conflicts know that Satan is a terribly real personage. He attacks us on the right hand and on the left, from beneath and from above. Very dexterously, with infernal malice, he endeavours to condemn the child of God. It is his business to be the accuser of the brethren, and he carries it on with very great vigour. He knows enough of our conduct to be able, truthfully, to bring to our memory much that might condemn us. When this fails, he never sticks at an accusation because it does not happen to be true. Being the father of lies, he will accuse us of things of which we are not guilty, or, when it suits his purpose, he will exaggerate our guilt, and make it appear worse than it is, in order that he may drive us to despair. There is only one way to successfully resist the onset of the arch-enemy; but that one way ensures certain victory. Up with your shield, and say, "Yes, it is all true, or it might have been, for my heart is so evil that it would have led me to any sin; but 'It is Christ that died.' " This will defeat your great adversary.

Suppose Satan should come to anyone who is seeking the Saviour, and say, "You will never find the Lord; you have sinned beyond all limit; you are too far gone for mercy to reach you; you must perish;" it will be your highest wisdom to give him this one reply, "It is Christ that died." That short sentence completely answers to all his accusations. There is no terror to him like the terror of the cross. He gloated over the crucifixion once, and he has been distressed and terrified by it ever since. Tell him that you are a sinner, and that if he should paint your sin in its blackest colours, you would not even then despair, for it would still be true that Christ "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Christ has

died, and there is more than enough virtue in his death to atone for the blackest or most crimson sins ever committed by men. Close beside the bottomless pit of our iniquity stands the cross whereon Christ has made recompense for all our faults; and when we set Christ over against the gulf of our sin, we see that he far transcends it. Sin is great, but Christ is greater. His precious blood takes away every stain of guilt. Take care that you do not answer Satan with any other argument than this: "It is Christ that died." Again and again let this blow, from the sword of the Spirit, descend upon him, "It is Christ that died," and you will soon be acclaimed the victor over your greatest foe. In this way "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

When you have overcome Satan, *the world* will come forth to attack you, and to dispute your claim to be numbered amongst the people of God. As long as you go with evil companions, they will applaud you. You will be "a jolly good fellow" while you join them in their folly; but when you give up their ways, their habits, and their society, then they will say that you are melancholy, and no longer fit company for such, "hail fellows, well met", and they will turn away from you. If you follow after Christ, and find eternal life, when they hear of it, they will sneer at you, and bring up all your past life against you. They will say, "What! *you* converted? You are as bad as any one of us. What! *you* a saint? Well, certainly, you made no pretension to it six months ago; you were about as black as a man could be." The world will begin to throw in the believer's teeth all his former iniquities, when he sets forth with the cry, "Who is he that condemneth?" Tell the world, once for all, that it may condemn you, if it pleases, for it condemned the Lord Jesus long ago, and say that, therefore, you think but little of the condemnation of your fellow-men. Tell the men of the world that it is right that they condemn you for all your past life, for doubtless you have been what they say you are, you will not dispute that fact; but tell them also that what Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth is true of you, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Tell even them that Christ died. If they say that Christ's death does not repair the injury you have done to your fellow-men, tell them that, as far as you can, you mean to make restitution to them; and wherein you have done the world an ill turn, let them know that your Master has done it more good than you ever did it harm. The influence of his holy religion has made abundant atonement to

the world for any wrong that you ever did to it. He has rendered more of good to men than you ever rendered of evil. In all your answers to the accusations of the world, take care that you base your hopes concerning forgiven sin upon the death of Christ. The world will, before long, understand what you mean by saying that Christ has made atonement for your sin; and, perhaps, here and there, a few of those who ridiculed you will be inclined to know more about this matter, and in private may come and ask you how the death of Christ has saved your soul. At any rate, meet the attack of the world as you met the attack of Satan, with this weapon only: "It is Christ that died," and you will be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

The third foe that will seek to condemn you, and one that you have great cause to fear, is *your own conscience*; but the weapon which has discomfited your other foes will also avail you against this one. Still, this foe is fierce and terrible. Let me feel the worm that never dies rather than the stings of an offended conscience, if indeed this is not itself, "the worm that dieth not." Fire such as martyrs felt at the stake were but a plaything compared with the flames of a burning conscience. We read that, when David had cut off Saul's skirt. "It came to pass afterward that David's heart smote him." It is an ugly knock that a man's heart gives when it smites him. There is no getting away from yourself, and when you yourself condemn yourself, then you are condemned indeed. You go to your bed, but your conscience is there, and it will not sleep. You go out to your pleasures, but your conscience goes with you, and spoils your mirth. You would forget your guilt in your daily business, but your conscience calls out at such a rate that there is no hearing anything else. Thunderbolts and tornadoes are nothing in force compared with the charges of a guilty conscience.

What is to be done when a man condemns himself? Can he still be valiant, and maintain his ground, calling out, "Who is he that condemneth?" Yes, blessed be God, even this foe can be overcome by the weapon the believer wields in the power of God, for he can tell conscience, as he told his former opponents, "It is Christ that died." It is a wonderful story — this old, old story, of Jesus and his love to guilty sinners; let me tell it once again. God so loved me that he willed to forgive me; but for the sake of the world which he governs righteously he could not forgive me without an

atonement for my sin. It would not have been consistent with his justice for him to pass by my sin. What was to be done? His own dear Son came, and stood in my place, and took my sin upon him. Knowing that my sin deserved death, he willingly died, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring me to God. God is well pleased with the death of Christ as the vindication of his justice, and for Christ's sake he says to me, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Tell conscience that Christ has died for your sins, according to the Scriptures, and it will be perfectly satisfied: it will not go to sleep, but it will use its voice for other purposes, and it will no longer seek to condemn you.

There is still another foe that answers your challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" Forth it steps into the arena, and we behold *the law of God*. What shall we say to that? The law of God says, "Thou shalt," and we have not done what it commands. The law of God says, "Thou shalt not," and we have done exactly what we were forbidden to do. Only too true is that confession, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us." The law condemned us in former days, and would again overthrow us if we ventured to meet it unarmed. It must condemn sin, for "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good." But when it has attacked us, and done its worst, there comes in the majesty of divine sovereignty. God is King over all, and able to govern the world according to his own mind, which mind is always infinitely just. He decrees that Christ Jesus, the Well-Beloved, even his own other self, who is one with him, should come into the world and bear the sin of man, make amends to the injured honour of God, and magnify the law before the eyes of the whole universe. If the guilty sinner dies, the law is honoured; but if God shall assume human flesh, and die for that sinner, the law is even more honoured. When Christ Jesus took away our guilt, and "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," justice was more terribly displayed than when guilty sinners sink to hell. We are only creatures after all, and when we are condemned, we sink down into destruction, and suffer for our sin; but he is the eternal God, and when he takes our nature, and cries, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and bleeds his life away in agony, then is the law of God abundantly honoured. Therefore do we say to that law, "Law, thou hast nothing to do with me; I am 'not

under law, but under grace.’ My Substitute has kept the law on my behalf. He has borne the penalty which I ought to have borne, and I am clear. I am now dead to the law. I have died in Christ, and my life now is that of a child of God, for I have been lifted to that high estate by my redeeming Lord.”

There is now nobody left that I know of, that can condemn us, except the Judge; and if we have escaped our opponents — Satan, the world, conscience, and the law, we need not fear to stand even at God’s judgment seat. The Judge is now on our side; and none of us need fear anybody’s condemnation if the Judge does not condemn us. You come into court with your case, and the counsel on the other side condemns you. When he sits down, he has done his worst; and his witnesses also condemn you; but if the verdict is in your favour, and the judge says that you leave the court with a stainless character, you do not care about the condemnation of others. Now, there is but one Judge — the man Christ Jesus. It is he that died for us. He cannot bring us in debt to divine justice; for in his own hands and feet are the nail-prints, which are the receipts of justice in full settlement of all claims against us. He has paid all we owed and he will vindicate his own death, and claim for the travail of his soul its due reward, which is the forgiveness and the salvation of all guilty men who have come and put their trust in him. Wherefore, since it is only our Judge who can condemn us, and since he is the very Person who has paid our debt for us, and put our sin away, we dare to repeat again, with additional emphasis, our ringing challenge to all the universe, “Who is he that condemneth?”

“Who now accuseth them,
 For whom their Ransom died?
 Who now shall those condemn
 Whom God hath justified?
 Captivity is captive led;
 For Jesus liveth, who was dead.”

In the second place, I see in our text A REMEDY FOR ALL SIN. On this I shall speak very briefly. We stand boldly in front of all our foes, because we know that we are free from the evil which once condemned us: it is all gone. Our confidence is therefore strong, and it is so because Christ’s dying has removed all sin from all believers.

“Look,” says one, “*there is sin*. It is true that you are a believer, but you have sinned often, for years, in all sorts of way.” Yes, as we look, we must confess that it is true, there is the sin. But *yonder is the Saviour*, and he is called Jesus, “For he shall save his people from their sins.” He has come on purpose to put away our sin, and when he died, he made an end of it. The answer, therefore, to the statement, “There is sin,” is this, “Christ has died.”

Another says, “Yes, but then you have been specially guilty, *there is great sin* against a great God. You have continued in it, and persisted in it.” True, we do confess that accusation; but then *there is a great sacrifice*, for he that came to save us, laid down his life for us; and greater sacrifice than this could never be. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” This is the grandest message of the gospel, that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” The apostle Paul puts this “first of all”, and every true preacher of the good tidings of salvation will follow his example. We have, indeed, in the death of Christ, a great atonement; an atonement so great, that none can measure its height and depth, its length and breadth. The glory of the Person who died, the anguish and the suffering he endured, the love that moved him to give himself up to death for us, all make us see how great the atonement is. There is great sin; that we know only too well: but we also rejoice in the knowledge that there is a great atonement to cover all our sin, “For it is Christ that died.”

“But, interrupts another, “*God must punish sin*. It is not optional with him, it is an inevitable law of the universe. Transgress the law, and punishment will follow.” It is even so; but listen: God must punish sin, and *God has punished sin*. He took the great mass of the sins of believers, and piled the whole on Christ; and when he hung upon the cross as his people’s Substitute, even his Father hid his face from him. He died, the Prince of glory died the ignominious felon’s death, in the room and place and stead of guilty men. God *has punished sin*; and when men say, “God must punish sin,” we answer, “Sin has been punished, for Christ has died.”

Not only is our sin punished, but *the sin is gone*. If my friend over yonder has paid my debt, it is gone. I owe no man anything after the debt has been paid, whether by myself, or by somebody else; and if Christ took our sin

upon himself, and suffered for it, the sins for which he suffered are gone, plunged as in a shoreless sea, drowned in the Redeemer's blood. They are gone, and gone for ever!

“He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoners free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.”

And that my sins are gone is further clear, for he rose again from the dead. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.” If he had not paid the debt, he would have remained in the prison of the grave; but he rose again. He has discharged the debt; and we have still another assurance that it is all gone, for the apostle goes on to speak of Christ “who is even at the right hand of God.” He would not be there if he were a debtor. If Christ owed anything to the justice of God by reason of his suretyship engagements, he would not be at God's right hand: but he owes nothing whatever. Both the sinner and the Surety are now free. The debt is paid, and Christ is at the right hand of God. And as to our weaknesses and infirmities, he is there to plead for his people: “Who also maketh intercession for us.” He ever liveth to secure effectually the eternal salvation of every soul for whom he died, even for every one who puts his trust in him. Are you among the number? Oh, if you, my dear hearers, knew the joy and peace that would come to you if you but trusted in the doctrine of substitution, you would not rest until you were able to say, “Christ was in my place, that I might stand in his place: my sins were laid on him, that his righteousness might be girded on me.” If you understood how delightful it is to get out of yourself into Christ, and to live because Jesus died, you would not linger and doubt, and fear, but you would say, “If it be so, I will come to Christ, and I will trust him, that with you I may say, ‘The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.’” This, then is God's great remedy for sin: “It is Christ that died.”

III. Now I want your attention while I try to show that this blessed sentence, “It is Christ that died,” is AN ANSWER TO EVERY ACCUSATION which, under any circumstances, may arise from sin. We have seen that Christ’s death enables us to conquer our foes, and frees us from our sins. It also delivers us from every fear and doubt. The death of Christ gives us a full salvation. I cannot mention all the accusations which sin makes, but I will mention a great many of them very quickly, and show how the man who believes in Christ, the dying Christ, the risen Christ, the reigning Christ, is able to meet and overcome them.

Sometimes the accusing whisper comes to your ear, “*You have sinned against a great God.* It will be a terrible thing to have to answer to the great and mighty God for having so sinned.” I will make no answer to that accusation but this: “It is Christ that died.” Christ himself, the great and mighty God is the “Interpreter, one among a thousand”, able to stand between me and God. It is true that God is great, but he cannot ask for more than divine righteousness, and in Christ I present that. Nay, his law never asked for more than human righteousness divine. The law has, therefore, more than it asked for, and I am thus not afraid of the anger of the great God. It is the mighty God himself who came here to be a Man, and to die in our stead, for is it not written that God hath bought his people with his own blood? We read of “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” It is a strong expression, but as it is Scriptural, we cannot alter it; and we have no wish to do so. Oh, beloved, if we have a God for our Redeemer, though our sins against God be very many, and though they be very black and foul, yet Christ’s infinite sacrifice meets them all.

“Love of God, so pure and changeless,
Blood of God, so rich and free,
 Grace of God, so strong and boundless,
 Magnify them all in me,
 Even me.”

“*You have robbed God of his glory,*” another voice seems to say. “You know how you used to blaspheme his name.” Or, perhaps, you were more polite; you did not curse and swear, but the accusation comes: “You argued against God and his Son, and against his blessed gospel; you have robbed him of his glory.” To that I give the same answer, “It is Christ that

died.” I know that I have robbed God of his glory, but Christ has brought all the glory back again. I see “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” A dying Saviour brings more glory to the love of God, ay, and to the justice of God, than any mortal sinner could have done; more than any perfect man, though he lived throughout eternity, could have done. Thus, that doubt is answered by the same all-powerful argument: “It is Christ that died.”

“Ah!” says the accuser “*but you sinned against light and knowledge*. You cannot deny it. When you sinned, you were not like the common people of the street, who know no better. You had a godly father; you had a Christian mother; you were trained in the fear of God. You read your Bible in early youth, and you went astray with a vengeance; for when you sinned, you knew that you were sinning, and yet you transgressed.” Yes, I know that it was so; and Christ, to meet my sin against knowledge brings a sacrifice offered with his own full knowledge of all that it involved.

“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne’er withdrew.”

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands,” poured out water, and began to wash his disciples’ feet, and then went, with full knowledge of all that was before him, to pour out his blood to wash their souls from guilt. In the midst of his agony on the tree, he still had full understanding concerning his sacrifice: “Knowing that all things were now accomplished,” he bowed his head, and died. Thus my ill knowledge is met by the great and heavenly knowledge with which he went about the work of offering a complete atonement in my place and stead. “It is Christ that died.”

“Ay, ay!” says yet another accuser; “*but you have sinned with delight*. You took a pleasure in it. You were not as some who were mere drudges to sin. You drank it down like sweet wine, and you could not have too much of it.” Ah! It is so; but then my Lord Christ delighted to come to be my Saviour. In the volume of the Book it is written of him: “I delight to do thy will, O my God! Yea, thy law is within my heart.: I took pleasure in sin; but, “he, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising

the shame.” Therefore, over against my delight in sin, I set his delight in presenting to the Father his perfect righteousness and his all-sufficient substitutionary sacrifice: “It is Christ that died.”

I do not seem to want to preach. I want to sit down, and suck all the sweetness out of this blessed truth: “It is Christ that died.” Ah! But another bitter taunt comes to me, “*You have sinned in spirit.* You not only sinned with your body, with your eyes, your lips, your hands; but you have sinned in imagination and desire very horribly.” Ah, brethren! Here we must bow our heads. All manner of evil things we commit in our thoughts; sin runs to riot in our spirit. Well, we confess that too; but then Christ suffered in his spirit. The sufferings of his soul were the very soul of his sufferings. He not only groaned in body, when beaten by the Roman soldiers, and pierced with nails and thorns; but in soul he was overwhelmed by exceeding heaviness, and by the desertion of his God. To atone for the sin of my soul there is the sorrow of his soul; if I poured out my soul in sin, he poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors. “It is Christ that died.”

If the black thought then comes up, “Ah! but *you have aforesaid refused Christ.* Many times you put him away. You quenched conscience. You went to the house of God, not to pray, but to laugh. Ay, and when Christ would have pulled you away, you held hard on to your sin! You long rejected Christ.” Yes; but I set over against that the fact that he always would have me. He loved me to the death; and albeit that he foresaw and foreknew that I should reject him, yet he would not take “No” for answer from me; but he resolved that his true grace should conquer me truly, and make me willing in the day of his power.

Still the accuser continues reminding us of our past life: “*you have trusted in others,* and turned away from Christ; you went everywhere before you came to him.” Did you ever want to hire a horse in a market-town? You went to some place, and asked the price, and thought it too high; then you went away to half-a-dozen other stablekeepers, and could not do any better, so you came back to the first; but he, displeased with you, very possibly said, “I do not want your custom. You have been to everybody else; you may go to them now.” I have known a surly man act in that way; but Christ never turns us away because we only come to him when others fail us. Many have gone round the world to look for a saviour other than

the Lord Jesus Christ, and they have only come to him when all others have failed them. It is astonishing where men will go to seek salvation. Some go to Rome, and some to Oxford; some go I know not where. They seek in vain; for there is no Saviour to be found, except at Calvary; and after you have made the circuit of the globe, and compassed heaven and hell to find another way of salvation, you will have to come back to Christ. Blessed be his name, he will not refuse you even then, if you will but believe him! The proof of love to the uttermost is that “It is Christ that died.”

But I feel a darkness coming down over my spirit, and in the darkness there is a fiendish voice that says, “But *you have committed unknown sins*, sins that nobody else knows, and there have been sins which you yourself did not know. Hidden in your heart there is a damning spot which your eye has not discovered.” Here comes in this blessed word taken out of the Greek litany, “By thine unknown sufferings.” It is almost as good as Scripture; for Scripture leads us to think of the sufferings of Christ as an unfathomable deep. Who can tell us what Christ’s suffering really was? It goes into the region of things unknown; it goes beyond the knowable; for flesh and blood will never be able to comprehend what Jesus suffered when the great flood of human sin came rushing down upon him, and filled his spirit to the brim. “It is Christ that died.” My unknown sins are buried in the unknown deeps of his almighty sacrifice.

Ah! but another thought comes up, “You know that he died; but then *you have slain your Lord*. You had a share in his death. You know that every sinner is guilty of the murder of Christ.” I know it; I know it to my shame and confusion; yet do I live by him I slew, I am saved by him I murdered; and I glory in the grace that makes such a miracle of mercy possible.”

“With pleasing grief and mournful joy
My spirit now is filled,
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by him I killed.”

Whether it was by mine or by any other wicked hands, yet it was by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” that Jesus died, in the stead of all who believe in him: I believe in him, therefore he has died for me. He died for his murderers, for those that mocked and insulted him; for

he commanded his disciples to begin preaching the gospel at Jerusalem, where they crucified him, to preach it even to those who had hounded him to his doom. O dear friends, what comfort lies in this word, “It is Christ that died.”!

“Ah!” says the accuser, but *you are still sinful*. What if Christ died for all your past sins? What about your present sinfulness?” Well, about that, I have this to say, “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” I believe that, when Christ died, he took all the sins of all his people, past, present, and to come, and when the whole mass was condensed into one bitter cup, he drank it all up.

“At one tremendous draught of love,”

leaving not so much as a single drop of wormwood or gall for any to drink who put their trust in him. Come, my hearer, if what I say to you be true (and I will answer for its truth at God’s great judgment-seat), then I pray you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; for “he that believeth in him shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.” I am in this boat myself. If it sinks, I am lost; but it will not sink, for the Plot of the Galilean Lake is on board. Come in with me, let us sail together to glory. I will not say, “Let us sink or swim together,” for there is no sinking to a soul that rests in Christ. This is a good seaworthy vessel: “It is Christ that died.” God has accepted Christ in the place of his people; and you, accepting Christ to stand in your stead, shall find that your sin is put away, that his righteousness is yours, and that you are “accepted in the Beloved.” I have once more preached the gospel to you as plainly and as simply as I can. Whether you will receive it, or not, must rest with yourselves. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to trust in “Christ that died”! God bless you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON

— Romans 8:26-39.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 537, 553, 297.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

MY DEAR READERS, — Your weekly preacher is still weakly; but though his progress towards strength is slow, it has been steadily maintained during the late trying weather. When we consider how many have died, your chaplain is very grateful to be alive, to be able to send forth his usual discourse from the press, and to be, as he hopes, half an inch nearer to his pulpit. Happy will he count himself when he is able to preach with the living voice.

Would it not be well for all the churches to hold special meetings for prayer concerning the deadly scourge of influenza? The suggestion has, no doubt, been made by others; but I venture to press it upon Christians of all denominations that they may, in turn, urge all their pastors to summon such meetings. Our nation is fast learning to forget God. In too many instances ministers of religion has propagated doubt, and the result is a general hardening of the popular feeling, and a greatly-increased neglect of public worship. It is written, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” Let us, who believe in inspired Scripture, unite our prayers that it may be even so. With a court and a nation in deepest mourning, it is a time to cry mightily unto the Lord.

I have been able again to revise a sermon without assistance. It is upon Psalm 105:37; and, if the Lord will, it will be published next week.

Yours, in deep sympathy with all the sick and the bereaved,

C. H. SPURGEON

Menton, Jan. 17, 1892.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

A STANZA OF DELIVERANCE

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, January 31st, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, July 31st, 1890.

“He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.”

— Psalm 105:37

This verse has been making music in my heart for several days, and at times it has even claimed utterance from my tongue. I have caught myself singing a solo, with myself as the only hearer; and this has been the theme, “He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” I love texts which sing to me, and make me join in their tune. If this verse should get into your hearts, and set you singing in a similar way, you will be entertaining a very pleasant visitor, and it will brighten a dark day for you.

Egypt may very fairly represent those states of sorrow and sadness, depression and oppression, into which God's people come far too frequently. Specially is the house of bondage a true picture of our condition when we are convinced of sin, but are ignorant of the way to escape from its guilt and power. Then sin, which was once our Goshen of pleasure, becomes our iron furnace of fear. Though we yield to sin when under conviction, yet we are no longer its willing subjects: we feel that we

are slaves, and we sigh by reason of sore bondage. Glory be to God, he has now brought us out from that state of slavery, and we can sing of freedom given by his own right hand!

Since then we have been permitted, in the order of God's providence, to live among evil persons who have had power over us, and have used it maliciously. They have hated our God, and, therefore, they have hated us, and shown their dislike of us in many harsh and expecting ways. We find no rest with them; but our soul is among lions. They seem as though they would devour us, or else frighten us from following the road to heaven.

Full often has our gracious God delivered his persecuted people from such a sorrowful condition, and brought them into a large room, wherein he has made them happy with Christian fellowship, and enabled them to go about holy work without let or hindrance. At such times, when God's people have come out from under the yoke of their oppressors, the Lord has "brought them forth also with silver and gold, and there has not been one feeble person among their tribes."

It is possible to go down again into Egypt by reason of our own depression of spirit, inward conflict, and despondency. If you like the preacher, you are by no means a stranger to inward sinkings. Though you do not give up your faith, but are still, like father Jacob, keeping your hold while the sinew is shrinking, yet you are "sore broken in the place of dragons." You feel that you are like that bush in the desert, which burned with fire, and, only through a miracle, was not consumed. When under temptations of the flesh, and memories of old sins, Satan himself comes in with his fiery darts, and you have a hard time of it. He will insinuate dark and dreadful thoughts, and you will be haunted by them, day after day, till you feel like the poor Israelites under the lash of the Egyptian taskmaster. Your covenant with God will bring you out of that state of anguish and distress; and when he does so, you will sing, "He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes."

God forbid we should repeat that senseless and wicked trust in man, which once made us do down into Egypt for help! We will not go there for pleasure: what have we to do with drinking the waters of the muddy river? We drink of a better river than the Nile, even of the river of the water of

life. But we shall go to the region weakness and pain to die. Unless the Lord should suddenly come in his glory, we shall close our eyes in death as Jacob and Joseph did. Then when we go into the tomb, which will be a kind of Egypt for our body, we shall only tarry there for a season. We shall slumber for a while, each one in his bed of dust, but the trump of the archangel shall awaken us, and our bodies shall rise again. We shall not, however, come from the grave so poor and feeble as we went in. No, we shall be great gainers by our sojourn in the dark abode. Those who see the saints in the day of resurrection, ascending to their thrones from the Egypt of death, may fitly say, "He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes."

I am going to try to handle my very delightful subject in the following way: — First, *the deliverances of God's people are always wrought by divine power*. Lay the stress on the first word: "HE brought them forth." Secondly, *their deliverances are attended with enrichment*. "He brought them forth also *with silver and gold*." And, thirdly, *their deliverances are accompanied by a remarkable degree of strength*. "There was not one feeble person among their tribes." May the Holy Spirit make rare music for you upon this harp of three strings!

I. First, then, when we are led out of the Egypt of our sorrow, OUR DELIVERANCE IS BY DIVINE POWER. When Israel comes out of Egypt, it was Jehovah who brought forth her armies. When any man is saved from spiritual bondage, *it is the Lord Jesus who looseth the captive*. Some little time ago, I delivered an address at the Mildmay Park Conference upon "Following Jesus in the dark", and the Lord was pleased to bless that word to a great many who were then under a cloud. For this cause, I greatly rejoice, but from this happy result I have also had to suffer many things in the following way: it seems as if persons everywhere, having read that address, must needs write to me an account of their trouble, despondency, and darkness of the soul. Having written the doleful narrative, they very naturally ask me endless questions by way of trying to find light for themselves out of my experience and knowledge. I have been delighted to answer those questions as far as I can; but there is a limit to human power. I have lately been like a doctor who has suddenly had a new practice handed over to him, when he was already as busy as he could be, both night and day. He finds his door besieged by patients who cannot

be dismissed with just a word of hope and a dose of medicine, but require a long time in which to tell their griefs and to receive their comfort.

Spiritually, my night-bell is always going; and when I visit a sick soul, it requires long and weary nursing. I know, therefore, from that, as well as from my own experience, that if ever a man is delivered from spiritual bondage of heart, it is not by any easy work, or by a hasty word. Nay, all the power of sympathy and experience will fail with some souls. God alone can take away the iron when it enters into the soul. It is of small use for those afflicted in mind to write to me, or to others, if their distress is spiritual, for God only can deliver them. If they are in the dark, we can strike a match as well as anyone else; but since they need the shining of the sun, that remains with the Lord, who alone creates the light. Oh, that the Sun of righteousness would rise with healing beneath his wings, on every soul that now sits in the midnight of despair! Deliverance from a cruel captivity, like that of Israel in Egypt, must be wrought by the hand and outstretched arm of Jehovah alone. When such a liberation is performed, then do we rapturously sing, "HE brought them forth."

But this does not exclude the use of means. The Lord used Moses and Aaron, and Moses used his rod and his tongue. Truly Jehovah brought forth Israel, and neither Moses nor Aaron nor the rod in Moses' hand; but yet the Lord's instruments were employed in the service. If the Lord delivers you, my dear afflicted friends, the work will not be done by the preacher, not by a consoling book, nor by any other means so as to prevent its being the Lord alone. The use of instrumentality does not hide divine power, but even makes it more apparent. The man Moses was not only very meek; but he was also so slow in speech that he needed Aaron's help; yet the Lord used him. Aaron was even inferior to Moses; but the Lord used him. As for the rod, it was probably nothing more than a hazel stick, which had been used by Moses in walking and keeping sheep; but it pleased the Lord to make of that rod a very remarkable use, so that no sceptre of kings was ever so greatly honoured. The Lord took care to employ means which could not pretend to share the honour with himself. Notwithstanding Moses, Aaron, and the rod, "HE brought them forth," and HE alone.

This work of the Lord *does not exclude the action of the will.* The people of Israel came forth freely from the country which had become the house of

bondage. “He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness.” They set out exultingly, glad to escape from the intolerable oppression of Pharaoh, who was to them a tyrant indeed. God does not violate the human will when he saves men: they are not converted against their will, but their will itself is converted. The Lord has a way of entering the heart, not with a crowbar, like a burglar, but with a master-key, which he gently inserts in the lock, and the bolt flies back, the door opens, and he enters. The Lord brought Israel forth; but they had cried unto the Lord by reason of their sore bondage, and they did not receive the blessing without the desiring it, yea, and sighing for it; and when it came, they joyfully accepted it, and willingly trusted themselves with him whom the Lord had made to be their mediator and leader, even Moses. They did not share the honour of their deliverance with God, but still they gave their hearty assent and consent to his salvation. Willingly as they were to move, it was still true, “HE brought them forth.”

Brethren, he must have brought them forth, for *they could never have come forth by themselves*. If you have read enough of Egyptian history to understand the position and power of the reigning Pharaohs, you will know how impossible it was for a mob of slaves, like the Israelites, to make headway against the imperious monarch, and his absolute power. If they had clamoured and rebelled, the only possible result would have been to slaughter many, and the still further enslavement of the rest. There was no hope for the most distinguished Israelite against the tyranny of the Pharaoh: He could simply cry, “Get you unto your burdens;” and they could do no less. Pharaoh crushed even his own Egyptians, and much more the strangers. You cannot look upon the pyramids and other vast buildings along the Nile, and remember that all these were built with unpaid labour, with the whip continually at the workman’s back, without feeling that a pastoral unarmed race, long held in servitude, could never have obtained deliverance from the power of Pharaohs, if the omnipotent Jehovah had not espoused their cause. “HE brought them forth.”

Beloved, we can never escape from the bondage of sin by our own power. Our past guilt, and the condemnation consequent thereon, have locked us up in a dungeon, whose bars we can never break. The prince of darkness, also, has such power over our evil natures that we cannot overcome him, or escape from under his dominion of ourselves. If we are ever set free

from sin and Satan, it will be eternally and infinitely true that the Lord brought us forth out of the house of bondage. "Salvation is of the Lord."

Moreover, *the spirit of the people was too crushed to have dared to come forth*, even if they could have achieved liberty by a brave revolt. Four hundred years of slavery had ground the very spirit out of the men of Israel. They toiled, they toiled, they toiled; and when Moses came and talked to them about freedom, at first they listened, and they hoped; but in a few hours they began to murmur, and to complain of Moses, and to cry, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." That abject condition was ours before conversion; we were not easily aroused to seek redemption. I remember hearing the gospel, and getting a little comfort from it, and almost immediately falling back into my former hopelessness; and I said in my soul, "I may as well enjoy the pleasures of sin while I can, for I am doomed to perish for my iniquities." The slavery of sin takes away manliness and courage from the spirit; and where bright hope smiles upon us, we answer her with the sullen silence of despair. Was it not so with you, my brethren, in those gloomy days? Therefore, it must be true, that, if the prisoners of sin have some forth, the Lord himself brought them forth. They had not the spirit of men who could dare to care about their freedom; they were too enfeebled by their own servile spirit. There may be some before me, at this moment, before whom God has set an open door, and yet they dare not go through it. Christ is put before you; you may have him for your trusting; you may have him at once; but you dare not take him. You are commanded to believe, but you dare not believe what you know to be true. You hear us sing the hymn —

"Only trust him, only trust him,
Only trust him now;"

but you dare not trust the Lord Jesus, though this is your only hope of obtaining salvation. Your sin has left you paralyzed with despair. O God, bring forth these prisoners, even now! Though they lie in the inner prison, with their feet fast in the stocks, may it be said on earth and sung in heaven, "HE brought them forth."

Yet the Lord did bring them forth. Not in part, but as a whole, he redeemed his people. Every one of them was set free. Not only all the human beings, but all their cattle came forth, according to the word of the Lord. “Not a hoof shall be left behind.” Christ Jesus, in redeeming his people, will have all or none. All that the Father gave him shall come to him; nor shall the power of sin, and death, and hell be able to hold in captivity one whom Jesus has effectually redeemed, nor one whom his Father chose. All the covenanted ones shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels. He has paid too much for them to lose one of them. In the loss of one of them too much would be involved; his word, his covenant, his power, his faithfulness, his honour, would all suffer, should one of his little ones perish. Therefore, he makes their deliverance effectual, and in every deed he brings them forth.

This deliverance came when the lamb was slain. Pharaoh held Israel captive during all the plagues, but he could not go beyond a certain point. On that same night when they saw the lamb slain, and roasted with fire, while they sat in their houses protected by the blood sprinkled upon the lintel, and the two side posts of their doors, that selfsame night they quitted Egypt. They went forth under that seal of redemption, the blood-red mark of substitutionary sacrifice. My dear hearer, perhaps this very night you will also go forth into glorious liberty. I know you will, if you will by faith look to Jesus as the Lamb slain for you. Will you now accept him as your own, and trust him to be your redemption? Behold, then, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! Take his precious blood, and let it be sprinkled on your door, yea, and upon your own self, that the angel of vengeance may pass you by. Can you come and feed on Christ at once, as the Lamb of God’s passover? Do you say that this would be a bold and venturesome faith? Yet be so bold and venturesome. Blessed to the name of the Lord, none were ever rejected, who dared to trust Jesus! We will sing about you and others if you have faith in the great sacrifice, and this will be our song, “HE brought them forth.”

Israel cannot remain under slavery to Egypt when once the redemption price has been accepted, and the blood has been sprinkled. None know freedom from sin but those who trust the atoning blood. God forbid that I

should point you to any way of hope but this one path; for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin!

I have perhaps said enough on this point; but assuredly I have fallen short, unless I have made you know each one that deliverance from sin is solely by the power of God. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Unless a supernatural power is put forth in it, any form of deliverance from sin is worth nothing. If you have been born again from below, you will go below; you must be born again from above if you are to go above. There is no true liberty but that wherewith Christ make you free. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Do you know what it is, dear friends, to be brought out of prison by a miracle of grace, by a revelation of the Holy Ghost, by the blood of Jesus shed for many? If so, you will join with all the saints in singing, "As for his people, HE brought them forth."

II. But now we reach a very pleasing part of our theme, We have now to note that OUR DELIVERANCE WAS ATTENDED WITH ENRICHMENT: "He brought them forth *with silver and gold*." "Oh!" says one, "I remember all that about that translation. That is the silver and gold which they borrowed from the Egyptians with no intent of repaying the loan. I have always thought that was a thievish trick." It was a very unfortunate mistake of our translators when they rendered the original by the word "borrowed", for it is not the correct word. Our Revised Version has it more accurately, "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of Gold, and raiment: and the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked." Even if you were forced to read the word "borrowed", it might mean nothing amiss, for all borrowing and nonpayment is not thieving. "Oh!" say you, "that is a new doctrine." Let me state the case. If I borrow upon the security of my property, and leave the property in the hand of the lender, he will not complain if the security is worth more than the loan. These Israelites had lands and houses and other property which they could not carry with them, and now that their sudden removal involved a forced sale, they could say to those who lived near them, "Here is our land, what will you give us upon it?" The people took the immovable property of the Israelites, and they granted them a loan upon it, they were well aware of

what they were doing, and were not defrauded. But we have no need thus to defend Israel. The Great Proprietor of all things bade them to ask, and influenced the minds of their neighbors to give. It was just that these poor people, who had been working without fee or reward, and had thereby screened the native Egyptians from much forced labour. The people of Egypt were, in part, afraid of them and of their God, and were also, in measure, sympathetic with them under their cruel oppression, and so they forced presents upon the Israelites hoping to get their blessing before they departed, to save them from further plague which might visit the land. The natives as good as said, "Take whatever you please of us, for we have treated you ill. Only leave us alone; for plagues and deaths fall upon us thick and fast so long as Pharaoh detains you here." However, this is not my point. I am dealing with more spiritual things. When God brings his people out of bondage, they come out enriched in the best and most emphatic sense.

This seemed very unlikely. It looks to the afflicted as if they could not be profited by trials such as theirs. If they can only escape by the skin of their teeth, they will feel perfectly satisfied. Depressed spirits cannot lift their thought so high as to think of the gold of increased joy, or the silver of enlarged knowledge, or the jewels of holy graces. "I am," said one, "quite prepared to sit down behind the door in heaven, or at the feet of the least of the saints, so long as I may but get there." In some respects this is a very proper feeling. But this is not God's way of acting; he did not lead forth his people in a poverty-stricken way, but "He brought them forth also with silver and gold." Your Deliverer means to enrich you spiritually when he sets you free from your sorrow and trouble.

It was very far from being the design of their enemies to enrich Israel: Pharaoh had intended to work them down to the last ounce of strength, and keep them in abject poverty; in fact, one chief object of his oppression was to kill down the race, lest they should too greatly multiply. But the Lord turned the curse into a blessing; "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew;" and the harder they worked, the healthier they became, so that "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." This was not according to their enemies' will; but the will of the Lord is paramount. Even so it is not the devil's will to drive a man nearer to Christ, but yet his temptations and assaults are often used of the Lord to

make the best and most experienced Christians. Satan is the scullion in God's kitchen, and he has to scour the vessels of mercy. Trials and afflictions, which threaten to kill us, are made to sanctify us; and sanctification is the best form of enrichment. How much we owe to sorrow and sickness, crosses and losses! Our bondage ends in our coming forth with much that is better than silver and gold.

Thus do we come forth from conviction of sin. "Now tell me," says one, "what does man gain by being in a desponding, sorrowful condition, convinced of sin, and full of fears?" By the work of the Holy Spirit he will gain much. He will obtain a clearer knowledge of the evil of sin. This is a rare thing nowadays, when we have so many believers who were never penitent. It is a great thing for a child, who has a habit of stealing apples, to get himself well filled with the sourest of them, and feel the gripes strong within him. He will never touch such fruit anymore. It is a great thing for a man, in his early days, to know what a sour apple sin is, and to feel heartache and soul-anguish because of the exceeding bitterness of his evil ways. It is a lasting lesson. As the burnt child dreads the fire, and the scalded dog is afraid even of cold water, so the discipline of conscience, through divine grace, breeds a holy caution, and even a hatred of sin. We have few Puritans because we have few penitents. An awful sense of guilt, an overwhelming conviction of sin, may be the foundation stone of a gloriously holy character.

The tried and tempted man will also see clearly that salvation is all of grace. He feels that, if he ever rises from his despondency, he can never dare to take an atom of the honour of deliverance to himself; it must be of free grace only. He can do nothing, and he knows it. When a child of God can spell GRACE, and can pronounce it clearly, as with the true Jerusalem accent, he has gained a great deal of spiritual silver and gold. I have heard a brother stutter over that word, "free grace", till it came out very like "free will." As for myself, that Shibboleth I pronounce without faltering, for my free will is that which I daily try to master and I bring into complete subjection to the will of God, and to free grace I owe everything. Blessed is that man, who, by his experience, has been made to know that free grace is the source of every blessing and privilege, and that salvation is all of grace from first to last. By a knowledge of the great gospel principle of grace, men are brought forth also with silver and gold.

Such persons gain by their soul trouble a fund of healthy experience. They have been in the prison, and have had their feet made fast in the stocks. "Well," says one, "I do not want to feel that sort of treatment." No, but suppose you had felt it, the next time you met with a brother who was locked up in the castle of the Giant Despair, you would know how to sympathize with him and help him. You who never felt a finger-ache cannot show much sympathy with broken bones. I take it to be a great gain to a man to be able to exhibit sympathy towards sufferers of all kinds, especially towards spiritual sufferers. If you can enter into the condition of a bondsman, because you have yourself been a bondsman in Egypt, and God has brought you out, then you will be qualified to comfort those that mourn.

Thus, you see, in various ways, the Lord's people are enriched by the sorrows from which they are delivered by God. "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold." Persons who come to Christ suddenly, and find peace immediately, have much to be grateful for; and they may be helpful to others of a similar character; but those who suffer long law-work, and have deep searchings of the heart, before they can enter into rest, have equal reasons for thankfulness, since they obtain a fitness for dealing with special cases of distressed conscience. Where this is the result of severe trial, we may well say that the Lord has brought them forth with silver and gold.

Thus do saints come out of persecution. The church is refined by the fires of martyrdom. The heap on the Lord's threshing-floor is more largely made up of real wheat after the winnowing fan has been used upon it. Individual piety is also deeper, stronger, nobler in persecuting times than in other seasons. Eminent saints have usually been produced where the environment was opposed to truth and godliness. To this day the bride of Christ has for her fairest jewels the rubies of martyrdom. Out of each period of fierce persecution the Lord has brought forth his people the better for the fires. "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold."

Thus do believers come out of daily afflictions. They become wealthier in grace, and richer in experience. Have you noticed how real those men are who have known sharp trial? If you want an idle evening of chit-chat, go and talk to the gentleman with a regular income, constant good health, and admiring friends; he will amuse your leisure hour. But if you are sad and

sorrowful, and need conversation that will bless you, steer clear of that man's door. Look into the faces of the frivolous, and turn away as a thirsty man from an empty cistern. He that has never had his own cheek wet with tears, cannot wipe my tears away. Where will you go in the day of trouble? Why, to that good old man whose sober experience has not robbed him of cheerfulness, though it has killed his sinful folly. He has been poor, and he knows the inconvenience of straightened means; he has been ill, and can bear with the infirmities of the sick; he has buried his dearest ones, and has compassion for the bereaved. When he begins to talk, the tone of his voice is that of a sympathetic friend. His lips drop fatness of comfort. What a gain is his spiritual acquaintance! A man of God, whose life has been full of mental exercises and spiritual conflict, as well as outward tribulation, becomes, through divine grace, a man of a large wealth of knowledge, prudence, faith, foresight, and wisdom, and he is to the inexperienced like some great proprietor, by whom multitudes of the poorer classes are fed, and guided, housed and set to work. Those who have been much tried are in the peerage of the church. A man who has been in the furnace, and has come out of it, is a marked man. I think I should know Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego even now if I were to meet them. Though the smell of the fire had not passed upon them, I feel sure that it left a glow upon their countenances, and a glory upon their persons, which we find no where else. They are, henceforth called "the three holy children": they were holy before, but now men own it. Do you not think that they were great gainers by the furnace, and is it not true of all the godly whose lives have been made memorable by special tribulation: "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold"?

When you and I reach the shores of heaven, *thus shall we come into glory*. When we come forth out of our graves, it will not be with loss, but with enrichment. We shall leave corruption and the worm behind us, and with them all that earthly grossness which made us groan in these mortal bodies. God will bring us forth also with silver and gold. What golden songs will we sing! What silver notes of gratitude will we pour forth! What jewels of communion with one another, and of communion with our Lord, will adorn our raiment! If we, too, have been men of sorrows and acquainted with grief, how much more fully shall we enter into the joy of our Lord, because we entered into his sorrow! We also have suffered for sin, and have done battle for God and for his truth against the enemy. We also have borne

reproach. And become aliens to our mother's children; we too have been bruised in the heel, and yet in death have conquered death, even as he did; only by his grace. Hence the joy of fellowship with him through eternity. What news we shall have to tell to angels, and principalities, and powers! The gems of our grateful history will be our trials and deliverances. Coming up from death to eternal life, this will be the sum of it, "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold."

Dear friends, I am anxious to pass on to the third point, for time is flying fast; but I cannot neglect the application of what I have said. I beg those of you who are sad and despondent to notice the truths I have advanced. I want you to believe that your present affliction is for your enrichment. You will come out of this Egypt, with much profit of grace. "Let me out," cries one, "only let me out." I pray you, be not impatient. Why rush out naked, when a little patience will be repaid with silver and gold? If I were labouring in Egypt, and I heard that it was time for me to start for the land of Canaan, I should be eager to be gone at once; but if I found that I must be hindered for an hour or two, I should certainly utilize the delay by disposing of my lands, and endeavouring to get together treasures which I could carry with me. The delay would not be lost time. Therefore, beloved friend, if you cannot at once obtain comfort, make good use of your affliction. Be always more earnest to profit by your trials than to escape from them. Be more earnest after the heavenly silver and gold than about hurrying away from the scene of conflict and temptation.

III. Thirdly; here is a very wonderful thing. OUR DELIVERANCE IS ACCOMPANIED WITH HEALTH AND STRENGTH: "There was not one feeble person among their tribes." In the thousands of Israel there was not one person who could not march out of the land keeping rank as an efficient soldier. Everyone was fit for the journey through the wilderness. They numbered hard upon two millions, if not more; and it is a very surprising fact that there should not have been one feeble person among their tribes. Mark the word, no only no one sick, nut no one "feeble", none with the rheumatism, or other pains which enfeeble walking, or palsies which prevent bearing burdens. This was nothing less than a sanitary miracle, the like of which was never know in the natural order of things.

This fact is typical of the health and strength of the newly saved. The Lord's people, at conversion, are as a rule wonderfully strong in their love to

Jesus, and their hatred of sin. In most cases our young converts, when they have truly come to Christ, even if they are a little timid, are vigorous, much in prayer, abounding in zeal, and earnest in speaking out the gospel. Many of them, I believe, would die at the stake readily enough, while they are in their first love. In their earliest days nothing is too hot or too heavy for them, for the sake of Jesus Christ, their Lord. If I want a bit of work to be done which requires dash and self-sacrifice, give me a set of Israelites who have just come out of Egypt, for there is not one feeble person among their tribes. After they have gone some distance into the wilderness, they are apt to forget the right hand of the Lord, and to get fretting and worrying. Very soon many of them are sick, through being bitten by fiery serpents, or smitten with the plague. They begin grumbling and complaining, and run into all sorts of mischief in a short time; but when they first came out, they were so excellent that even the Lord said, "I remember thee, the love of thine espousals." I have known some of you, after you have been members of the church for a few months, greatly need a nice cushion to sit upon, and the cozy corner of the pew; whereas once you could stand in the aisle, and not know that you were standing. You have grown wonderfully particular about the singing, and the tunes, and the length of the prayer, and the preacher's attitude, and especially the respect paid to your own dear self. Only very choicest service suits you: it would almost insult you if you were put to common work. You were not like that when you were first converted. Do you recollect how the crowd pressed upon you, and yet you were so absorbed in listening to the preacher's voice that you never minded it? What walks you took then to reach the service! I notice, my friend, that when your grace grew short, the miles grew long. When you first joined the church, I said to you, "I fear you live too far off to attend regularly." But you took me up very quickly, and said, "Oh, that is nothing, sir! If I can only get spiritual food, distance is no object." When you get cold in hearts, you find it inconvenient to come so far, and you go to a fashionable place of worship, where your musical tastes can be gratified. Yes, when grace declines, fancy rules the mind, and love of ease controls the body, and the soul loses appetite, and grows greedy for empty phrases, and weary of the Word of God. May the Lord grant you grace to be among those of whom it is said, "There was not one feeble person among their tribes"!

Full often it is so with the persecuted. I do not wish that any of you should experience persecution, but I am persuaded it would do some of you good to have a touch of it. A man who has fulfilled an apprenticeship to this hard master, is likely to be a man indeed. If he has endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he will be fit to become an officer in the army, and an instructor of recruits. If I could, by the lifting of my finger, screen every believer from persecution at home and in the workshop, I should hesitate long before I did it, since I am persuaded that the church is never more pure, more holy, more prayerful, or more powerful than when the world is raging against her. The dogs keep off the wolves. The hypocrite declines to enter the church where he will gain nothing by reproach, or worse. When there were the stakes at Smithfield, Protestantism meant heroism. When the Lord's covenanting people were meeting among the hills and mosses of Scotland, there were no "moderates" and "modern-thought" men among them. They knew and loved the truth for which they fought and that truth made them strong.

It could be a glorious day if it were so with all God's people, that there were none feeble. We should, as a church, labour to reach this high standard. We would have the weakest to be as David, and David as the angel of the Lord. We would have our babes become young men, and our young men fathers in Christ. Do we reach this standard at the Tabernacle? Alas! We do not, by a very long way. There are numbers of very feeble persons among our tribes. I will not say a word against them, dear hearts! For I trust they are sincere, though feeble. How greatly I wish that they were more concerned about their own feebleness, for it is a real loss to the cause we have at heart! The feeble hinder the strong. We want all the strength of the host for storming the enemies' ramparts, whereas some of us have to stop behind and nurse the infirm. We should not mind this so much, only these are the same poor creatures that were nursed twenty years ago, and they have not made no advance. May the Lord strengthen us all, till we shall all be made fit for the service of Jesus!

Oh, when we meet in the home country, when we once get to glory, what a delight it will be that *there will be no sin or weakness there!* When the Lord has once brought us forth from the world and all its troubles, then all sinful weakness shall be unknown. We shall all be raised in power, and shall be as angels of God. Are you going there, dear friends? "Yes," says

one, "I hope that I am going there; but I am a feeble person." Thank God that you are on the right road, even if you limp. It is better to enter into life halt, and maimed, and feeble, than to run and leap in the way of death. If I can give a lift to anyone who is feeble, I am sure I will. At the same time, I would urge you to cry to the Lord to make you strong, and bid you trust in Christ for the power, which he alone can give, of faith to overcome doubts and fears.

If any of you have not believe unto eternal life, now put your trust in the Lord Jesus. They serve a good Master who trust alone in Jesus, and take up their cross and follow him. In him is life for the perishing, joy for the sorrowing, rest for the weary, and liberty for the captives. Are you shut up, like a prisoner in a castle? Do but trust in Jesus, and he will batter the dungeon door, and bring you out. Yea, and he will not give you a penniless liberty, a liberty to perish of want. No, it shall be said of you, and of others like you, "HE brought them forth also with silver and gold." Amen, so be it! So be it, even at this moment, good Lord!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Psalm 105.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 30, 116, 126.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

GOD'S WILL ABOUT THE FUTURE

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, February 7th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, October 16th, 1890.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This Sermon was published the week of Spurgeon's death. The great preacher died in Mentone, France, January 31, 1892. This and the next few Sermons in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* were printed with a black mourning band circling the margins. A footnote appeared from the original editors, commenting on the providential selection of this message for that particular week:

It is remarkable that the sermon selected for this week should be so peculiarly suitable for the present trying time. It ought to be read with special solemnity. Oh, that it may be the means of leading many to make the great preparation for the future which only believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have made!

“Go to now, ye that say, to day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

— James 4:13-17

Men to-day are just the same as when these words were first written. We still find people saying what they are going to do to-day, to-morrow, or in six months time, at the end of another year, and perhaps still further. I have no doubt there are persons here who have their own career mapped out before them pretty distinctly, and they feel well-nigh certain that they will realize it all. We are like the men of the past; and this Book, though it has been written so long, might have been written yesterday, so exactly does it describe human nature as it is at the end of this nineteenth century.

The text applies with very peculiar force when our friends and fellow-workers are passing away from us. Sickness and death have been busy in our midst. Perhaps in our abundant service we have been reckoning what this brother would do this week, and what that sister would be doing next week, and so on. Even for God's work we have had our plans, dependent in great measure on the presence of some beloved helpers. They have appeared amongst us in such buoyant health, that we have scarcely thought it possible that they would be struck down in a moment. Yet so it has often been. The uncertainty of life comes home to us when such things occur, and we begin to wonder that we have reckoned anything at all safe, or even probable, in such a shifting, changing world as this. With this in full view, I am going to talk about how we ought to behave with regard to the future, and attempt to draw some lessons for our own correction and instruction from the verses before us.

Following the line of the text, and keeping as close to it as we can, we will notice, first, that *counting on the future is folly*. Then we will observe what is clear enough to us all, that *ignorance of the future is a matter of fact*. In the third place, I shall set before you the main truth of this passage, that *recognition of God in the future is wisdom*, our fourth point shall be that *boasting of the future is sin*; and our final thought will be, that the *using of the present is a duty*.

I. To begin with, it will need but few words to convince you that **COUNTING ON THE FUTURE IS FOLLY**. The apostle says, "Go to now!" as if he meant, "you are acting absurdly. See how ridiculous your conduct is." "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will do such and such a thing." There is almost a touch of sarcasm in the words. The fact of frail, feeble man so proudly ordering his own life and forgetting

God seems to the apostle James so preposterous that he scarcely deems it worth while to argue the point, he only says “Go to now!”

Let us first look at *the form of this folly*, and notice what it was that these people said when they were counting on the future. The text is very full of suggestions upon this matter.

They evidently thought everything was at their own disposal. They said “We will go, we will continue, we will buy, we will sell, we will get gain.” But it is not foolish for a man to feel that he can do as he likes, and that everything will fall out as he desires; that he can both propose and dispose, and has not to ask God’s consent at all? He makes up his mind, and he determines to do just what his mind suggests. Is it so, O man, that thy life is self governed? Is there not, after all, One greater than thyself? Is there not a higher power that can speed thee or stop thee? If thou dost not know this, thou hast not yet learned the first letter of the alphabet of wisdom. May God teach thee that everything is not at your disposal; but that the Lord reigneth, the Lord sitteth King for ever and ever!

Notice, that these people, while they thought everything was at their disposal, used everything for worldly objects. What did they say? Did they determine with each other “We will to-day or to-morrow do such and such a thing for the glory of God, and for the extension of his kingdom”? Oh, no, there was not a word about God in it, from beginning to end! Therein they are only too truly the type of the bulk of men to-day. They said, “We will buy; then we will carry our goods to another market at a little distance; we will sell at a profit; and so we will get gain.” Their first and their last thoughts were of the earth earthy, and their one idea seemed to be that they might get sufficient to make them feel that they were rich and increased in goods. That was the highest ambition upon their minds. Are there not many who are living just in that way now? They think that they can map out their own life; and the one object of their efforts seems to be to buy and sell, and get gain; or else to obtain honour, or to enjoy pleasure. Their heart rises not into the serene air of heaven; they are still groveling here below.

All that these men of old spoke of doing was to be done entirely in their own strength. They said, “We will, we will.” They had no thought of asking the divine blessing, nor of entreating the help of the Most High.

They did not care for that, they were self-contained; they called themselves “self-made men”; and they intended to make money. Who cannot make money who has made himself? Who cannot succeed in business who owes his character, and his present standing, entirely to his own exertions, and to his own brain? So they were full of self-confidence, and began reckoning for the future without a shadow of doubt as to their own ability. Alas, that men should do so even to-day, that, without seeking counsel of God, they should go forward in proud disdain, or in complete forgetfulness of “the arrow that flieth by day”, and “the pestilence that walked in darkness”, until they are suddenly overwhelmed in eternal ruin!

It is evident that to those men everything seemed certain. “We will go into such a city.” How did they know that they would ever get there? “We will buy, and sell, and get gain.” Did they regulate the markets? Might there be no fall in prices? Oh, no! they looked upon the future as a dead certainty, and upon themselves as people who were sure to win, whatever might become of others.

They had also the foolish idea that they were immortal. If they had been asked whether men might not die, they would have said, “Yes, of course all men must die some time or other,” for all men count all men mortal; but in their hearts, they would have made an exception in their own case, if we may judge them by what we were apart from sovereign grace. “All men count all men mortal but themselves.” Without any saving clause, they said, “We will continue there a year.” How did they know that they would see a single quarter of that year through? But you must not press such men too closely with awkward questions. If you had done so, they would have said, “Do not talk about death; it makes one melancholy.”

Having looked at the form of this folly of counting on the future, let us speak a little on *the folly itself*. It is a great folly to build hopes on that which may never come. It is unwise to count your chickens before they are hatched; it is madness to risk everything on the unsubstantial future.

How do we know what will be on the morrow? It has grown into a proverb that we ought to expect the unexpected; for often the very thing happens which we thought would not happen. We are constantly surprised by the events which occur around us. In God’s great oratory of

providence, there are passages of wondrous eloquence, because of the surprise-power that is in them. They come upon us at unawares, and overwhelm us. How can we reckon upon anything in a world like this, where nothing is certain but uncertainty?

Besides, the folly is seen in the fact of the frailty of our lives, and the brevity of them. "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time." That cloud upon the mountain — you see it as you rise in the morning; you have scarcely dressed yourself before all trace of it has gone. Here in our streets, the other night, we came to worship through a thick fog, and found it here even in the house of prayer. But while we worshipped, there came a breath of wind; and on our way home a stranger would not have thought that London had been, but a few hours before, so dark with dirty mist; it had all disappeared. Life is even as a vapour. Sometimes these vapours, especially at the time of sunset, are exceedingly brilliant. They seem to be magnificence itself, when the sun paints them with heavenly colours; but in a little while they are all gone, and the whole panorama of the sunset has disappeared. Such is our life. It may sometimes be very bright and glorious; but still it is only like a painted cloud, and very soon the cloud and the colour on it are alike gone. We cannot reckon upon the clouds, their laws are so variable, and their conditions so obscure. Such also is our life.

Why, then, is it, that we are always counting upon what we are going to do? How is it that, instead of living in the eternal future, where we might deal with certainties, we continue to live in the more immediate future, where there can be nothing but uncertainties? Why do we choose to build upon clouds, and pile our palaces on vapour, to see them melt away, as aforetime they have often melted, instead of by faith getting where there is no failure, where God is all in all, and his sure promises make the foundations of eternal mansions? Oh! I would say with my strongest emphasis: Do not reckon upon the future. Young people, I would whisper this in your ears; Do not discount the days to come. Old men, whispering is not enough for you, I would say, with a voice of thunder: Count not on distant years; in the course of nature, your days must be few. Live in the present; live unto God; trust him now, and serve him now; for very soon your life on earth will be over.

We thus see that counting on the future is folly.

II. Secondly, IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE IS A MATTER OF FACT. Whatever we may say about what we mean to do, we do not know anything about the future. The apostle, by the Spirit, speaks truly when he says, “Ye know not what shall be on the morrow.” Whether it will come to us laden with sickness or health, prosperity or adversity, we cannot tell. To-morrow may mark the end of our life; possibly even the end of the age. Our ignorance of the future is certainly a fact.

Only God knows the future. All things are present to him; there is no past and no future to his all-seeing eyes. He dwells in the present tense evermore as the great I AM. He knows what will be on the morrow, and he alone knows. The whole course of the universe lies before him, like an open map. Men do not know what a day may bring forth, but Jehovah knows the end from the beginning. There are two great certainties about things that shall come to pass — one is that God knows, and the other is that we do not know.

As the knowledge of the future is hidden from us, *we ought not pry into it.* It is perilous, it is wicked, to attempt to lift even a corner of the veil that hides us from things to come. Search into the things that are revealed in Holy Scripture, and know them, as far as you can; but be not so foolish as to think that any man or woman can tell you what is to happen on the morrow; and do not think so much of your own judgment and foresight as to say, “That is clear, I can predict that.” Never prophesy until after the event, and then, of course, you cannot prophesy; therefore never attempt to prophesy at all. You know not what shall be on the morrow, and you ought not to make any unhallowed attempt to obtain the knowledge. Let the doom of King Saul on Mount Gilboa warn you against such a terrible course.

Further, *we are benefited by our ignorance of the future.* It is hidden from us for our good. Suppose a certain man is to be very happy by-and-by. If he knows it, he will be discontented till the happy hour arrives. Suppose another man is to have great sorrow very soon. It is well that he does not know it, for now he can enjoy the present good. If we could have all our lives written in a book, with everything that was to happen to us recorded therein, and if the hand of Destiny should give us the book, we should be wise not to read it, but to put it by, and say: —

“My God, I would not long to see
 My fate with curious eyes,
 What gloomy lines are writ for me,
 Or what bright lines arise.”

It is sufficient that our heavenly Father knows; and his knowledge may well content us. Knowledge is not wisdom. His is wisest who does not wish to know what God has not revealed. Here, surely, ignorance is bliss: it would be folly to be wise.

Because we do not know what is to be on the morrow, *we should be greatly humbled by our ignorance*. We think we are so wise; do we now? And we make a calculation that we are sure is correct! We arrange that this is going to be done, and the other thing; but God puts forth his little finger, and removes some friend, or changes some circumstance, and all our propositions fall to the ground. It is better for us, when we are low before the throne of God, than when we stand up and plume ourselves because we think we can say, “Oh, I knew it would be so! See how well I reckoned! With what wondrous forethought I provided for it all!” Had God blown upon our plans, they would have come to nought. We know nothing surely. Let that thought humble us greatly.

Seeing that these things are so, *we should remember the brevity, the frailty, and the end of our life*. We cannot be here long. If we live to the extreme age of men, how short our time is! But the most of us will never reach that period wherein we may say to one another, “My lease has run out.” How frail is our hold on this world! In a moment we are gone, gone like the moth; you put your finger upon it; and it is crushed. Man is not great; man is less than little. He is as nothing; he is but a dream. Ere he can scarcely say that he is here, we are compelled to say that he is gone.

We are glad that we do not know when our friends are to die; and we feel thankful that we cannot foretell when we shall depart out of this life. What good would it do to us? Some who are in bondage through fear of death might be in greater bondage still, while those who are now careless about it would probably feel more content in their carelessness. If they had to live another twenty years, they would say, “At any rate, we may sport away nineteen of them.” As for those of us to whom this world is a wilderness, and who count ourselves as pilgrims hurrying through it, we know enough

when we know that this is not our rest, because it is polluted, and that the day will soon come when we shall enter the Canaan of our inheritance, and be “for ever with the Lord.” Meanwhile, the presence of the Lord makes a heaven even of the wilderness. Since he is with us, we are content to leave the ordering of our lives to his unerring wisdom. We ought, for every reason, to be thankful that we do not know the future; but, at any rate, we can clearly see that to count on it is folly, and that ignorance of it is a matter of fact.

III. Thirdly, RECOGNITION OF GOD WITH REGARD TO THE FUTURE IS TRUE WISDOM. What says our text? “For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.” I do not think that we need always, in every letter and in every handbill, put “If the Lord will”; yet I wish that we oftener used those very words. The fashionable way is to put it in Latin, and even then to abbreviate it, and use only the consonants, “D.V.”, to express it. You know, it is a fine thing when you can put your religion into Latin, and make it very short. Then nobody knows what you mean by it; or, if they do, they can praise your scholarship, and admire your humility. I do not care about those letters “D.V.” I rather like what Fuller says when he describes himself as writing in the letter such passages as “God willing”, or “God lending me life.” He says, “I observe, Lord, that I can scarcely hold my hand from encircling these words in parenthesis, as if they were not essential to the sentence, but may as well be left out as put in. Whereas, indeed, they are not only of the commission at large, but so of the quorum, that without them all the rest is nothing; wherefore hereafter, I will write these words freely and fairly, without any enclosure about them. Let critics censure it for bad grammar, I am sure it is good divinity.” So he quaintly puts the matter. Still, whether you write, “If the Lord will”, or not, always let it be clearly understood; and let it be conspicuous in all your arrangements that you recognize that God is over all, and that you are under his control. When you say, “I will do this or that,” always add, in thought if not in word, “If the Lord will.” No harm can come to you if you bow to God’s sovereign sway.

We should recognize God in the affairs of the future, because, first, *there is a divine will which governs all things*. I believe that nothing happens apart from divine determination and decree; even the little things in life are not

overlooked by the all-seeing eye. “The very hairs of your head are numbered.” The station of a rush by the river is as fixed and foreknown as the station of a king, and the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as much as the stars in their courses. All things are under regulation, and have an appointed place in God’s plan; and nothings happens, after all, but what he permits or ordains. Knowing that, we will not always say, “If the Lord will”; yet we will always feel it. Whatever our purposes may be, there is a higher power which we must ever acknowledge; and there is an omnipotent purpose, before which we must bow in lowliest reverence, saying, “If the Lord will.”

But while many of God’s purposes are hidden from us, *there is a revealed will which we must not violate*. It is chiefly in reference to this that the Christian should always say, “I will do this or that, provided that, when the time comes, I shall see it to be consistent with the law of God, and with the precepts of the gospel.” I say now, “I will do this or that,” but certain other things may occur which will render it improper for me to do so. Hence, to be quite in accordance with the Word I so deeply reverence, I must always put in the saving clause, sometimes giving utterance to it, but in every case meaning, whether I put it into words or not, “I will do so and so, if it be right to do it; I will go, or I will stay, if it be the will of God.”

In addition to this, *there is a providential will of God which we should always consult*. With this guidance, which comes from the circumstances that surround us, believers are familiar. Sometimes a thing may seem to us to be right enough morally, and yet we may not quite know whether we should do it or not. Or perhaps, there are two courses equally right, when judged by the Word of God, and you are uncertain which to follow. The highest wisdom, in such a case, is to wait for God to make a path plain by some act of providence. When you come where two roads meet, in your perplexity pull up, kneel down, and lift your hearts to heaven, asking your Father the way. And whenever we are purposing what we should do — and we ought to make some purposes, for God’s people are not to be without forethought or prudence — we should always say, or mean without saying, “All my plans must wait till the Lord sets before me an open door. If God permit, I will do this; but if the Lord will, I will stop, and do nothing. My strength shall be to sit still, unless the Master wishes me to go forward.” May I whisper into the ear of some very quick,

impetuous, and hasty people, that it would be greatly to their soul's benefit if they knew how to sit still? Many of us seem as if we must always do everything at once, and hence we make no end to muddle for ourselves. There is often a blessed discipline in postponement. It is a grand word, that word, "wait"; especially in this particular connection. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Be patient; sometimes even to be passive in the hand of God will be our strength, and to stand still until the cloudy, fiery pillar moves in front of us, will be our highest wisdom.

There is yet another sense I would give to this expression: *there is a royal will which we would seek to fulfill*. That will is that the Lord's people should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. So, as the servants of the Most High, we go forth to do this or that, "if the Lord will", that is to say, if, by so doing, we can fulfil the great will of God in the salvation of men. I wish that this was the master-motive with all Christians; that we were each willing to say, "I will go and live in such a place, if there are souls to be saved there. I will take a house in such a street, if, by living there, I can be of service to my Lord and Master. I will go to China or Africa, or to the ends of the earth, if the Lord will; that is to say, if, by going there, I can be helping to answer that prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Dear Christian friends, do you put yourselves entirely at God's disposal? Are you really his, or have you kept back a bit of yourself from the surrender? If you have retained any portion for yourself, that little reserve that you have made will be the channel by which your life will bleed away. You say, "We are not our own; we are brought with a price:" but do you really mean it? I am afraid that there is a kind of mortgage on some Christians. They have some part they must give, as they fancy, to their own aggrandisement. They are not all for Christ. May the Lord bring us all to his feet in whole-hearted consecration, till we can say, "We will not go to that city unless we can serve God there. We will not buy, and we will not sell, unless we can glorify God by not buying and selling; and we will not wish even for the honest gain that comes of trading; unless we can be promoting the will of God by getting it. Our best profit will consist of doing God's will." A man can as much as serve God by measuring calico, or by weighing groceries, as he can by preaching the gospel, if he is called to do it, and if he does it in a right spirit. This should always be our aim, and we should put this ever in

the forefront of our life. "I go or stay, I ascend or I descend, if the Lord will; the Lord's will shall be done in my mortal body whether I live or whether I die."

May this be your resolve, then; let this clause, "if the Lord will", be written across your life, and let us all set ourselves to the recognition of God in the future. It is a grand thing to be able to say, "Wherever I go, and whatever happens to me, I belong to God; and I can say that God will prepare my way as well when I am old and grey-headed as he did when I was a boy. He shall guide me all the way to my everlasting mansion in glory; he was the guide of my youth, he shall be the guide of my old age. I will leave everything to him, all the way from earth to heaven; and I will be content to live only a day at a time; and my happy song shall be —

"So for to-morrow and its need
I do not pray,
But keep me, guide me, hold me, Lord,
Just for to-day."

IV. And now, fourthly, **BOASTINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE ARE EVIL.** "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil." I will not say much upon this point, but briefly ask you to notice the various ways in which men boast about the future.

One man says, about a certain matter, "*I will do it, I have made up my mind,*" and he thinks, "You cannot turn me. I am a man who, when he has once put his foot down, is not to be shifted from his place." Then he laughs, and prides himself upon the strength of his will; but his boasting is sheer arrogance. Yet he rejoices in it, and the Word of God is true of such a one: "All such rejoicing is evil."

Another man says, "*I shall do it, the thing is certain;*" and when a difficulty is suggested, he answers, "Tut, do not tell me about my proposing and God's disposing; I will propose, and I will also dispose; I do not see any difficulty. I shall carry it out, I tell you. I shall succeed." Then he laughs in his foolish pride, and rejoices in his proud folly. All such rejoicings are evil. They are foolish; but, what is worse, they are wicked. Do I address myself to any who have no notion about heaven or the world to come, but who feel that they are perfect masters of this world, and,

therefore talk in the manner I have indicated, and rejoice as they think how great they are? To such I will earnestly say, “All such rejoicing is evil.”

I heard a third man say, “*I can do it. I feel quite competent.*” To him the message is the same, his boasting is evil. Though he thinks of himself, “Whatever comes in my way, I am always ready for it,” he is greatly mistaken, and errs grievously. I have often been in the company of a gentleman of this sort, but only for a very little while; for I have generally got away from him as soon as I could. He knows a thing or two. He has got the great secret that so many are seeking in vain. All of you ordinary people, he just snuffs you out. If you had more sense, and could do as he does — well, then, you could be as well off as he is. Poor man! “Nobody needs to be poor,” says he. “Nobody needs to be poor. I was poor a little while; but I made up my mind that I would not remain poor. I fought my own way, and I could begin again with a crust, and work myself up.” You will notice his frequent use of the capital I, but ah, dear sir, God has thunder-bolts for these great I’s! They offend him; they are a smoke in his nostrils. Pride is one of the things which his soul hates. No man should speak in such a strain: “All such rejoicing is evil.”

But that young man yonder talks in a different tone. He has been planning he will do when he succeeds; for, of course, he is going to succeed. Well, I hope that he may, He is going to buy, and sell, and get gain; and he says, “*I will do so and so when I am rich.*” He intends then to live his fling, and to enjoy himself; he laughs as he thinks what he will do when his toilsome beginnings are over, and he can have his own way. I would ask him to pause and consider his life in a more serious vein: “All such rejoicing is evil.”

There is, of course, a future concerning which you may be certain. There is a future in which you may rejoice. God has prepared for them that serve him a crown of life, and by humble hope you may wear the crown even now. You may, by the thoughts of such amazing bliss, begin to partake of the joy of heaven; and this will do you no harm. On the contrary, it will set your heart at rest concerning your brief stay on earth, for what will it matter to you whether your life is cloudy or bright, short or long, when eternity is secure? But concerning the uncertainties of this fleeting life, if you begin to rejoice, “All such rejoicing is evil.”

V. That brings me to my last and most practical point, which is this: THE USING OF THE PRESENT IS OUR DUTY. “therefore to him that knoweth good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” I take this text with its context. It means that he who knows what he ought to do, and does not do it *at once*, to him it is sin. Tho text does not refer to men who live in guilty knowledge of duty, and neglect it; its message is to men who know the present duty, and who think that they will do it by-and-by.

In the first place, *it is sinful to defer obedience to the gospel*. “He that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” Do you say, “I am going to repent”? Your duty is to repent now. “I am going to believe,” do you say? The command of Christ is, “Believe now.” “After I have believed,” says one, “I shall wait a long time before I make any profession.” Another says, “I am a believer, and I shall be baptized some day.” But as baptism is according to the will of the Lord, you have no more right to postpone it than you have to postpone being honest or sober. All the commands of God to the characters to whom they are given come as a present demand. Obey them now. And if anyone here, knowing that God bids him to believe, refuses to believe, but says that he hopes to trust Christ one of these days, Let me read him this: “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not,” — this word is in the present tense, — “to him it is sin.”

In the next place, *it is sinful to neglect the common duties of life*, under the idea that we shall do something more by-and-by. You do not obey your parents, young man, and yet you are going to be a minister, are you? A pretty minister will you make! As an apprentice you are very dilatory and neglectful, and your master would be glad to see the back of you; he wishes that he could burn your indentures; and yet you have an idea you are going to be a missionary, I believe? A pretty missionary you would be! There is a mother at home, and when her children are neglected while she talks to her neighbours; but when her children are off her hands, she is going to be a true mother in Israel, and look after the souls of others. Such conduct is sin. Mind your children; darn the stockings, and attend your other home duties; and when you have done that, talk about doing something it other places. If present duties are neglected, you cannot make up for the omission by some future piece of quixotic endeavour to do what you were never called to do. If we could all be quiet enough to hear that

clock tick, we should hear it say, “Now! Now! Now! Now!” The clock therein resembles the call of God in the daily duties of the hour. “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin,” even though he may dream of how he will, in years to come, make up for his present neglect.

Then, dear friends, *it is sinful to postpone purposes of service*. If you have some grand project and holy purpose, I would ask you not to delay it. My dear friend, Mr. William Olney, whose absence we all mourn to-night, was a very prompt, energetic man. He was here, he was there, he was everywhere, serving his Lord and master; and now that he is suddenly stricken down, his life cannot be said to be in any sense unfinished; there is nothing to be done in his business; there is nothing to be done in his relation to this church. There is nothing left undone with regard to anybody. It is all as finished as if he had known that he was going to be struck down. Mr. Whitefield said that he would not go to bed unless he had put even his gloves in their right place. If he should die in the night; he would not like to have anybody asking, “Where did he leave his gloves?” that is the way for a Christian man always to live; have everything in order, even to a pair of gloves. Finish up your work every night; nay, finish up every minute. I have seen Mr. Wesley’s Journal, though it is not exactly a “journal”; it does not give an account of what he did in a day, nor even what he did in an hour. He divided his time into portions of twenty minutes each; and I have seen the book in which there is the record of something done for his Lord and Master every twenty minutes of the day. So exactly did he live, that no single half-minute ever seemed to be wasted. I wish that we all lived in that way, so that we looked, not at projects in some distant future that never will be realized, but at something to be done now.

Last Thursday, when I was speaking, I said that some Christian people had never told out the story of the cross to others, and urged them to begin to do so at once. A young friend, sitting in this place, leaned over the front of the pew, and touched a friend sitting there, saying to her, “I would like to speak to you about that.” He had never spoken to her before, he did not even know her, and he thus addressed her while the service was proceeding. A member of the church, sitting by her side, who heard what the young man said, was so pleased with his prompt action, that she stayed after the

service to sympathize and help, while he explained the way of salvation. The young person, to whom he spoke, came to tell me, last Tuesday, that she had found the Saviour through that well-timed effort. Dear friends, that is the way to serve the Lord. If we were to do things at the moment when they occurred to us, we should do them to purpose. But, oh, how many pretty things you have always meant to do, and have never even attempted! You have strangled the infant projects that have been born in your mind; you have not suffered them to live, and grow into manhood of real action. First thoughts are best in the service of God, and the carrying of them out would secure great benefit to others and much fruit for ourselves. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." God help us, if we are saved, to get at this holy business of serving the Lord Christ, which as far exceeds buying and selling, and getting gain, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Let us do something for Christ at once. You young people that are newly converted, if you do not very soon begin to work for Christ, you will grow to be idle Christians, scarcely Christians at all; but I believe that to attempt something suited to your ability almost immediately, as God shall direct you, will put you on the line of a useful career. God will bless you, and enable you to do more as the years roll onwards.

I have this last word: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin," that is, *it is sinful in proportion to our knowledge*. If there is any brother here, into whose mind God has put something fresh, something good, I pray him to translate it into action at once. "Oh, but nobody has done it before!" Somebody must be first, any why should not you be the first if you are sure that it is a good thing, and has come into your heart through God the Holy Ghost? But if you know to do good, and do not do it; it will be sin every minute that you leave it undone. Therefore get at it at once. And you, my sister, who to-night, while sitting here thinking of something you might have done which you have not yet attempted, attempt it at once. Do not let another sun rise, if you can help it, before you have begun the joyful and blessed service. "The time is short." Our opportunities are passing, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Be up and doing. Soon we shall be gone. May we never hear the summons to go home while there is anything left undone that we ought to have done for our Lord and Master!

I am conscious of having spoken but very feebly and imperfectly; but, you know, my heart is heavy because of this sore trial which has come upon us through the stroke that has fallen on our beloved deacon, William Olney; and when the heart is so sad, the brain cannot be very lively. May God bless this word, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Note:

This sermon was preached at the time that Mr. William Olney, the senior deacon of the Tabernacle church, was lying unconscious, after a paralytic stroke. He fell asleep in Jesus the next morning. On the following Lord's-day evening, the Pastor preached, from Acts 13:36, "if the Lord will."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — James 4.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 90, 39, 211.

When last week's sermon was sent to the printers, Mr. Spurgeon was unable to write a letter to go at the end of it, for he was suffering so severely that he could not even dictate a message to his sermon-readers. It was not then anticipated that his illness would take the terrible form it afterwards assumed: but on *Tuesday, January 26*, when the doctor came, he was obliged to report his patient's condition as "serious." Since then, the daily bulletins have carried the sad tidings far and wide; and most of the readers of the sermons probably know, by this time, that their beloved preacher has been suffering the same malady that so grievously afflicted him during last summer and autumn. His illness, on this occasion, has not developed exactly the same symptoms as before; but at the date of writing this note (Jan 31), the doctor reports that "*his condition gives cause for the greatest anxiety.*"

It is with profound regret that the Publishers record the death of the beloved Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He was called to his rest, at Menton, on Sunday, January 31st, at 11 p.m.

To all who were privileged to know Mr. Spurgeon, this event has come as a great sorrow; a sorrow which will certainly be shared by every reader of the weekly sermons.

“I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

— Revelation 14:13.

The weekly Sermon and *The Sword and the Trowel* will be continued as usual, the Publishers having a large quantity of manuscripts and Sermons hitherto unpublished.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

MEMBERS OF CHRIST

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, February 21st, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, October 23rd, 1890.

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

— Ephesians 5:30

Yesterday, when I had the painful task of speaking at the funeral of our dear friend, Mr. William Olney, I took the text which I am going to take again now. I am using it again because I did not then really preach from it at all, but simply reminded you of a favorite expression of his, which I heard from his lips many times in prayer. He very frequently spoke of our being one with Christ in “living, loving, lasting union” — three words which, in addition to being alliterative, are very comprehensive as to the nature of our union with Christ. Those three words, you will remember, were the heads of my discourse, in the presence of that remarkable gathering which crowded this place to do honour to the memory of our brother, whose highest ambition was always to honour his Lord, whom he so faithfully served.

Paul here speaks only of true believers. Men who are quickened by divine grace and made alive unto God. Of them, he says, not by way of romance, nor of poetical exaggeration, but as an undisputed matter of fact, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” That there is a true

union between Christ and his people in no fiction or dream of a heated imagination. Sin separated us from God, and in undoing what sin has done, Christ joins us to himself in a union more real than any other in the whole world.

This union is very near, and very dear, and very complete. We are so near to Christ, that we cannot be nearer; for we are one with him. We are so dear to Christ, that we cannot be dearer. Consider how close and tender is the tie when it is true that Christ loved us, and gave himself for us. It is a union more intimate than any other which exists among men; for “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” We were his enemies when Christ died for us, that he might save us, and make us so one with himself, that from him our life should be drawn, and that in him our life should be hid. It is, then, a very near and dear union which Christ has established between himself and his redeemed; and this union could not be more complete than it is.

It is, also, a most wonderful union. The more you think of it, the more you will be astonished, and stand in sacred awe before such a marvel of grace. Well did Kent say —

“O sacred union, firm and strong,
How great the grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be
One with Incarnate Deity!”

But so it is. Even the incarnation of Christ is not more wonderful than his living union with his people. It is a thing to be considered often; it is the wonder of the skies; and is chief among those things which “the angels desire to look into.” On the surface of this truth you may not see much; but the longer you gaze, and the more the Holy Spirit assists you in your meditation, the more you will see in this wonderful sea of glass mingled with fire. My soul exults in the doctrine that Christ and his people are everlastingly one.

This is a very cheering doctrine. He that understands it has an ocean of music in his soul. He that can really grasp and feed upon it will often sit in the heavenly places with his Lord, and anticipate the day when he shall be with him, and shall be like him. Even now, since we are one with him, there is no distance between us, we are nearer to him than anything else can ever

be. The very idea of union makes us forget all distance: indeed distance is altogether annihilated. Love joins us so closely with Christ, that he becomes more to us than our very selves; and though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

In passing, I may say that this doctrine is very practical. It is not merely a piece of sugar for your mouth; it is a light for your path, for “he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.” We must take care that the love that was round about Christ’s feet, is always shining on our path. We must go about doing good, following in the steps of our Lord. It would be giving the lie to this doctrine if we lived in sin; for, if we are one with him, then we must be in this world even as he was; and being filled with his Spirit, must seek to reproduce his life before the world.

These thought may serve as an introduction to a fuller consideration of this great subject; and I shall begin by saying that, in Holy Scripture, *the union between Christ and his people is set forth under various forms*. Then I will try to show you that *the metaphor in our text is full of meaning*; and, in the third place, I will prove to you that *the doctrine of our union with Christ has its practical lessons*. As we delight our hearts in the glorious truth that “we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his “bones,” may we determine to live as those who are this closely joined to the Lord of life!

I. Our first thought is, that **THIS UNION IS SET FORTH UNDER SEVERAL FORMS**. The blessed fact is almost beyond our highest thought: what wonder, then that language fails adequately to describe it! Simile after simile is used. I am only going to mention four of them.

The union between Christ and the believer is described as the union of *the foundation and the stone*. “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.” We are built on Christ, and built up into him. We lie upon him just as the stone rests on the foundation. Well may we sing —

“All my hope on thee is stayed,
All my help from thee I bring”!

The stone is one with the foundation in its dependence. In the time of our need we press the closer to Christ; the heavier our hearts, the more we bear our weight upon him. It is the heavy stone that clings to the foundation; the light stone, perchance, might be blown away. But we cling at all times, depending wholly upon him, even as the stone rests upon the rock beneath. The stone does not bear up its own weight: it just rests where it is put. So do we rest on Christ. He is the foundation, and we repose on him.

Again, the stone is one with the foundation in its adhesion. In the course of time, the stone becomes more and more knit to it. When first the mortar is placed there, and is wet, you might also shake the stone. But, by-and-by, the mortar dries, and the stone seems to bite into the foundation, and holds fast to it. In old Roman walls, you cannot get a stone away; for the cement, which joins the stone to its fellows is as strong as the stone itself; and, truly, that which joins us to Christ is stronger than we are. We might be broken, but the bond of love, which holds us like a mighty cement to Christ, who is our foundation, can never be broken away. We have actually become one with him, as I have often seen stones in the walls of an old castle become one with each other. You could not get them away; they are part and parcel of the wall, and it would have been necessary to blow the wall to pieces before you could separate the stones from one another. So have we, by God's grace, become one with Christ, experimentally and indissolubly. The course of years has bound us still faster to him.

The stone is one with the foundation, moreover, in its design. The architect, in placing the stone, was following out his plan. He planned the foundation, and thought of every course; and the stone is essential to the wall, even as the foundation is essential to the stone. Thus we are one with Christ in the design of God. Reverently we saw it, that God's purpose comprehends not only Christ, but the whole company of his elect; and without his chosen people, the design of Jehovah can never be accomplished. He is building a temple to his praise; but a temple cannot be all foundation. There is a necessity for every stone in the wall; in the divine purpose, there is a necessity that such a one should be a living stone, and such a one should be another living stone. The weakest and the meanest of the Lord's people are as necessary as the noblest and the most beautiful, though indeed all are without any praise until they are built into

the wall. He that chose Christ, chose all his people; he arranged that they should be built up together, and in him “all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” Oh, I like to think of each one of us, however insignificant we may appear to be, as being bricks or stones in that great temple of almighty grace! Perhaps some of us may stand where everybody can see us; but what does it matter? If we are in the wall at all, it is well. Wherever you are placed, we are joined to Christ; and therefore no one has a pre-eminence over any other, because we are all alike built upon the one foundation, even Jesus Christ our Lord, into whom we daily grow, pressing closer and closer to him in experience, and holding tighter and tighter to him by faith.

The second aspect in which our union with Christ is represented in the Scripture, is that of *the vine and the branches*. “I am the vine, ye are the branches,” is the word of Christ to his disciples. The former simile of the foundation and the stone does not suggest any idea of life. Hence, the apostle, in using it, had to speak of Christ as a living stone, and of us as living stones. It is a somewhat odd figure, and yet it is strictly true; for you and I have no more spiritual life in us than stones, except as a miracle makes us live; and then, though we are living, yet like stones, we are apparently inert and lifeless, albeit we are really quickened by a supernatural work, and made living stones. But the figure is not congruous.

This second simile, however, conveys to us the idea of life, for a vine is no vine if it is dead, and its branches are no true branches unless they are alive. There is a living union between Christ and his people; and I hope that I can appeal to the experience of many here present who know that there is a living union between them and Christ. Happy is the man who can say, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”!

The union is even more than a union of life; it is a union of derived life. The branch is in such union with the stem that it receives all its sap from it; it could not live unless the living juices flowed from the stem into it. And such is our life. Christ pours his lifeblood into us. Perpetually, as long as he exists, he seems to be oozing out into his people. In fact, when his wounds were open, he bled life into us; and when his heart was burst, he changed our hearts, and gave them life, though they once were hearts of

stone. We are so one with Christ, that we at first received our life from him, and we continue to receive it from him every moment.

In consequence of the life of Christ in us, we grow. The growing of the branch is really the growing of the vine. It is because the stem grows that it sends its growth into the branch, and manifests it there. As Christ pours his life-force into us, he makes us grow, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Fruit-bearing is the ultimate end of our union to Christ. We are one with him that we may bring forth fruit unto his praise. Dear friends, are we really doing this? Are we not satisfied with a nominal union to Christ, even though we bear no fruit to his honour? We ought to be very distressed when we are barren and unfruitful; remembering that the great Husbandman has a sharp knife, and that it is written, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." Oh, that none of my hearers may ever be in Christ in that false way, but may we all be in him in a union so true and vital as shall cause us to bear fruit to his praise; for then, though we shall be pruned, we shall never be cut from the vine!

The third metaphor which the Saviour deigns to give of this union is that of *the husband and the wife*. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." Here you have a union, not only of life, but also of love. It is worthy of notice that the two words, "live" and "love", should be so like each other. In spiritual things, the two things are not only similar, they are exactly alike. Love is the life; and life is always first sent, and chiefly sent in the form of love.

With the true husband, his wife is himself. The Scripture saith, "He that loveth his wife loveth himself;" and I believe that Christ considers that, when he loves his church, he loves himself. His care for us is now his care for himself. Since he has taken us to be in eternal wedded union with himself, he regards us as himself, and he cares for us as he cares for himself: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." No sane man will injure his own flesh. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." So Christ takes care of his people, because he regards them as being bound to himself by those bonds which make them to be as himself. Hence we are kept as the apple of his eye.

Remember that, in every family, the wife is the mother of the children; and so it is in the church of Christ. He would have us all bear unto him a Holy Spiritual seed. If we abide in him, we shall be able to propagate our faith, and bring others into the church. Every believer should have this object before him as the joy of his life; for thus shall Christ “see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.”

The wife, too, is the keeper of the house. She takes care of the household concerns of her husband. And so would the Lord Christ have his people care for his interests, and for all that belongs to him; for he has committed these things unto us, as the husband commits his treasures to his wife. He has left us in custody of all that he has. In one sense we are the stewards of his household, but in another and a clearer sense, we are united to him by marriage bonds which can never be broken. It is a sweet subject; but I cannot linger upon it. You must let your own thoughts be fragrant with its aroma. However close may be the union of husband and wife, the union between the believer and Christ is closer still. Oh, to realize more and more of it each day!

“O Jesus! Make thyself to me
A living, bright reality;
More present to faith’s vision keen
More than any outward object seen.
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e’en the sweetest earthly tie!”

All human imagery fails to set forth the union between Christ and his people; but the figure in our text is that of *the head and the member*. The apostle says of Christ, that “we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Christ is the Head, and we are members of his body. Wonderful union this! In the first metaphor, the foundation and the stone, we had the idea of rest; in the second, the vine and the branches, the idea of life; the union of the husband and wife gave us the thought of love; now here we have the suggestion of identity. There are two lives in the husband and the wife, but there is only one life in the head and the body; and in this respect this metaphor brings out the true relation of Christ to his people more clearly than any other.

There is a wonderful union between the head and the members of the body. It is a union of life, and a union of the body which always continues. The husband may have to travel miles away from the wife; but it can never be that the head can travel away from the body. If I were to hear of any man whose head was a foot, or even an inch away from his body, I should say that he was dead. There must be perpetual union between the head and the members, or else death follows; and the death, mark you, not only of the body, but of the head as well. They are dead when they are divided. How glorious is this thought when we apply it to the Lord, and his redeemed people! Their union is everlasting. They would die if separated from him, and even he would cease to be did he lose them; for, somehow or other, they are so joined, that he will not be without them: he cannot be without them, for that were for the Head of the church to be divided from the members of his mystical body. Thus is we are able to sing —

“And this I do find, were two so joined,
He'll not be in glory, and leave me behind.”

II. Having thus shown you these four figures — and there are others, but I have not time to speak upon them — I now come to the one before us in the text, and remark that THIS METAPHOR IS FULL OF MEANING: “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” There are seven points to which I would ask your attention.

There is here *union of life, union of relationship, and union of service*. See what I mean. Your hand never studies what it can do for the head; but when the head wishes the hand uplifted, immediately up goes the hand; and when the head wishes that the hand should go down, down it goes in an instant. There is no deliberation or discussion about the matter. The head and the members, in a healthy body, are practically one. If you happen to be ill, it may be different. I have sometimes seen, in a person semi-paralyzed, the leg throw itself out without any guidance from the head; and sometimes — how often has it happened to me! — the head has willed that the hand should turn the pages of a book, and the hand has been unable to do it. Did you ever notice when you are falling, how, without thought, your hands always try to save your head? If any person were about to strike you, you would not deliberate; but up would go your arm to protect your head. This law is also true in spiritual life. All true Christians will do anything to save their Head. He saved us, and now our

desire is to save him. We cannot bear that he should be insulted, that his gospel should be despised, or that anything would be done against his sacred dignity. We are so one with our glorious Head, that the moment anyone strikes at him, up goes our hand immediately in his defense. Oh! I trust that you know what this means; if you are ever put up to the pain of hearing Christ's gospel falsely preached, or seeing professedly Christian men bringing disgrace upon his dear name, you feel at once that you would rather bear any pain, or any reproach, than that Christ should be injured. The hand is so one with the head, that it endeavours to screen it.

Between the head and the members there is also *union of feeling*. If the head aches, you feel it all over, you are altogether ill; and if your finger aches, your head does not feel well. There is such a sympathy between all parts of the body that, "whether one member suffer, a;; members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Christ is our Head, and the Head specially suffers with the members. I do not know whether it is always so clear that one hand suffers with another hand, as it is clear that the head suffers with either hand. So is it with the church. It may not always be clear that all the members sympathize with each other, but it is always clear that Christ sympathizes with each one of his people. There is a quicker way, somehow, from the head to the hand, than there is from one hand to the other, and there is a keener sympathy between Christ and his people than there often is between one of his servants and another. It is written concerning his people that "In all their affliction he was afflicted." In all thy sorrows, child of God thy heavenly Head feels the pain!

There is, moreover, *a union of mutual necessity* between the members and the head. The head wants the body. Now, I must speak very guardedly here, when I refer to the thought to Christ, but still it is true. What would my head be without my body? It would be a ghastly sight. And Christ without his people would be incomplete. A dying Christ, redeeming nobody! A living Christ, with no one to live by his life, would be a grin failure! Christ on Calvary, and souls going down to hell, with none saved by his precious blood! Christ incarnate on the cross, without a single man saved by his incarnation and his death! It would be a fearful sight. The church is said to be Christ's fulness — "The church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." This is a wonderful expression.

Now, the fulness of the head is the body; take the body away from the head, what is it? As to the body, what could it be without the head? If your head were gone, you could not have swiftness of foot, or deftness of hand, or strength of heart. No; there remains nothing for the head if it is severed from the body; and nothing for the body if it is separated from the head. There is between them a union of mutual necessity.

There is, farther, between the head and the members *a union of nature*. I will not attempt to describe the chemical composition of human flesh; but it is quite clear that my head is made of the same flesh as my members. There is no difference between the flesh of one and the flesh of the other. So, though our covenant Head is now in heaven, and his feet are on earth, yet still Christ is so one by nature with his people, that he is very man of very man, as much as he is very God of very God. If you deny his humanity, I do not think you till long hold his divinity. And if you deny his Deity, you have sadly destroyed the perfection of his humanity; for a perfect man he could not be if he so acted as to make men think that he was God, when he was not. To us he is God-Man in one person, whom we love and adore; his nature is the same as our nature, and we art joined to him forever.

“Lord Jesus, are we ONE with thee?
Oh, height! Oh depth of love!
With thee we died upon the tree,
In thee we live above.

“Oh, teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That thou with us art truly ONE,
And we are ONE with thee!”

Between Christ and his people there is also a *union of possession*. Nothing belongs to my head that does not belong to my hand. Whatever my head can claim as its own, my hand may claim as its own. Whatever belongs to Christ belongs to you, poor believer! Christ is rich, can you be poor? Even his Father is your Father, and his heaven is your heaven; for you are so one with him that all the broad possession of his infinite wealth are given freely to you. He bestows upon you his bounty, not only “to the half of the kingdom”, but the whole of it. Joined to him, all that he has is yours.

Between the Lord and his church there is also a *union of present condition*. Christ is very dear to his Father's heart. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," was the word which came from the opened heaven concerning Christ; and as God delights in Christ, so is he also well pleased with you who are in Christ. Yes, he is as pleased with you as he is with Christ; for he sees you in Christ, and Christ in you. God makes no division between you and him to whom he has joined you. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Certainly God will never separate that which he has united in Christ. Do not put yourself asunder from Christ, even in your thoughts, by supposing that you are not well-beloved of God even as his own covenant Head.

Last of all, there is a *union of future destiny*. Whatever Christ is to be, you are to be a sharer of it all. How can you die while Jesus lives? How can the body die, while the head lives? If we go through the waters, they cannot overflow us until they overflow our head. While a man's head is above water, he cannot be drowned. And Christ up yonder, in the eternities of glory, can never be conquered: neither can those be vanquished who are one with him. For ever and for ever, till the Christ shall die, till the immortal Son of God expires, you who are united to him in the purpose of God, and in faith which now lays hold of him, shall live and reign. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Is it not that a quietus to every fear of destruction? You are so one with him that, when the sun becomes a burnt-out coal, and the moon is turned into a clot of blood, when the stars fall as the leaves of autumn, and the heaven and earth shall melt away, going back into nothingness from which Omnipotence hath called them, you shall live, for he shall live who is your Head. "We believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death shall have no dominion over him." Where he goes we shall follow. I have heard it said, that when a thief is able to get his head through the bars of the window, his body can easily follow. I am not sure of that; but I know that where my Lord has gone, his members shall surely be. "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore," is a word that is meant for your consolation. Take it home. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," and, as Doddridge sings —

"Since Christ and we are one,
Why should I doubt or fear?"

If he in heaven hath fixed his throne,
He'll fix his members there."

III. Lastly, and briefly, THIS DOCTRINE HAS ITS PRACTICAL LESSONS, which I will try to set forth plainly so that those of us who are members of Christ may bring greater joy and glory to our Head than we have brought aforetime.

To begin with, I would say, if we are indeed one with Christ, *we should have no doubt about it*. It used to be a fashion, and I fear in some quarters still, to think that mistrust of our own condition, and doubt concerning our own salvation, is a kind of virtue. I have met with good people, who would not say that they were saved; they "hoped" that they were; and I have met with others who were not sure that they were cleansed by the precious blood of Christ; they "trusted" that they were. This state of mind is not a credit either to Christ, or to ourselves. If I told my son something, and he were to say to me, "I hope you will keep your word, father," I should not feel that he treated me as he ought. Surely, to believe Christ up to the hilt is the way to honour him. If we are one with him, we lose the comfort of it if we do not know certainly the fact of our blessed union; we miss much of the confidence that comes of it if we do not clearly apprehend the reality; and we are robbed of much of the joy which it brings, and how little of the meaning of that word "the joy of the Lord is your strength," unless we believe simply like children, and take the word to mean what it says, and are certain about it. This is an age of doubt; but, as for me, I will have none of it; I have doubted enough, and more than enough; I have done with it long ago; and I can say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep which I have committed unto him against that day." Salvation is by faith. Damnation comes by doubt. Doubt is the death of all comfort, the destruction of all force, the enemy of God and man.

If we are one with Christ, *we should go through the world like princes*; we should be like Abraham among his fellows, who claimed no principedom, and wore no crown, yet who could say to the King of Sodom what he had already vowed to God, "I will not take from a thread unto a shoe-latchet, and I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." If you are one with Christ, treat the world in that way. O world, thou canst not bless me! God hath blessed me. Thou canst not

curse me! God hath blessed me. Dost thou laugh? Laugh if it pleaseth thee. Dost thou frown? What signifieth it to me? If God has smiled upon me, thou mayest spurn me. If I am one with Christ, I expect that thou shouldest think little of me; for thou didst spurn my Head. Should the body of Christ expect better treatment than the Head received?

If we are one with Christ, we shall remember that *to dishonour ourselves is to implicate our Lord*. If I dishonour any part of my body, my head feels the shame of it; and since we are the members of Christ, we should be very careful how to behave, lest we should cause him pain. Men will judge Christ by his people. If I caught sight of a pair of legs very unsteadily walking along the street, I should be inclined to say that they belongs to a drunken head. If our walk among men is not such “as becometh the gospel”, what hard thoughts those around us may have of our Saviour! Of course, we know that any ill estimate of him will be false, for he is all fair, and there is no spot in him; but still his name and his cause will suffer dishonour. Let us not, then, injure or defile ourselves, lest we should bring reproach upon him whom we love!

In the next place, if we are one with him, *to think of him should be very natural*. There are many of us who could say, without any exaggeration, that though we do not think so much of our Lord as we should, and are not so much with him in contemplation as we desire, yet we have spent more time with him than we have spent with anybody else. Little as we know compared with what we hope to know, yet his love has become to us now the brightest, the most conspicuous fact in all our history. We know but few things; but we know that we are one with Christ in a union never to be broken. We know him, too, by our intercourse with him. We saw him this morning; we have seen him during the day; we shall see him again to-night. I should not like to go to bed with any other thought upon my mind than this —

“Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Saviour’s breast.”

If we are one with him, *to live with him should be the most natural thing in our lives*. Have I not heard, however, of some professors who have not

had communion with Christ for many a day? I talked once with a brother, who said a great deal about many things; and when he had complained of this and of that, I leant forward to him, and said, "Brother, how long is it since you have had close fellowship with Christ?" He answered, "Oh, there you have got me!" When I asked him, "What do you mean by that?" he answered, "I am afraid that I have not had fellowship with Christ for months." I had suspected that it must have been so, or else his conversation would not have been of the kind it was. What a sad thing it must be for a wife to live in her husband's house, and not speak to him for weeks! But how much worse it is for us to profess to be one with Christ, and yet have no sort of communication with him by the month together! This is something perfectly horrible. God save us all from such a thing! May we think continually of our Lord, and ever live with him, because we are one with him!

Again, being one with Christ, *to serve him should be very natural*. Indeed we exist, but to do his will, and to glorify his name. Of what use are my hands and feet unless they move at the impulse of my head? They are but encumbrances unless they are ready to obey the bidding of my mind. If your arms hang helpless, you do not know what to do with them; whichever side you turn, they are in the way. To be paralyzed is most unnatural, yet I fear me there are many of us of but little use to our Master. We hear his word, but do not obey it; he calls for helpers, and we run not at his bidding! Come, come, this will not do. We are members of Christ, and the one purpose of our life should be to serve our Head. God help us all to do it!

I will not continue longer. I leave you to draw the many inferences which naturally spring from our being one with Christ. Our heaven lies in our union with him. Ay, and sometimes when we realize our oneness with Christ, we can hardly think that we should be happier in heaven than we are now! May you all have this enjoyment! Oh, you would think that we raved, if we told you the unspeakable delight, the immeasurable bliss, which communion with Christ has brought into our souls. I desire that all of you should know the same rapture. I never enjoy a thing without wishing everybody to enjoy it; therefore when I come to this point of being one with Christ, and the delight it brings, I would to God that you all knew it, too! But alas! You do not; some of you do not even desire it. I

have been talking something like Dutch to some of you to-night; you have not comprehended my language at all. May the very fact that you have not understood it, or cared about it, lead you to suspect that there is a joy which you have not known, and a life which you have not found; and when you know that it is son, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.” If you seek him with all your heart, you will surely find him; and very soon you also will be brought into “living, loving, lasting union” with Christ.

Remember that the least touch of faith is sufficient to save the soul. That poor woman, who came behind Christ in the throng, only touched the hem of his garment, yet that timid touch brought healing and health to her. Virtue went out of him into her, and she was made whole of her plague. If thou canst only touch the Lord by the finger of thy faith, ay, though it be thy little finger; it shall be well with thee; though thy hand be quivering with the palsy of unbelief, yet, still, if thou hast faith enough to touch him, to come into contact with him, thou hast set the whole machinery of salvation in motion. God give thee to find eternal life even now! Why not? If my dear friend were here, of whom this drapery is a memorial, he would say unto me, “Oh, tell them to taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are all they that trust in him!” You know how fond he was of that verse we sang yesterday —

“Oh make but a trial of his love;
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in his truth confide!”

God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Ephesians 5

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 760, 761, 762.

Readers of the Sermons have probably all seen the very full reports, published in the daily and weekly newspapers, of the memorial and funeral service relating to their now glorified preacher. Those who took part in the impressive meetings at the Tabernacle, or gazed upon the almost countless multitude that thronged the road from Newington to Norwood, or formed part of the privileged company that gathered around the grave, must have

felt that they were spectators of a scene without parallel in the history of this generation, at least. Comparatively few were able to hear all the tributes of love to the dear departed one, the gospel he so faithfully preached, and the Saviour he so fondly loved. Many will be glad to know, therefore, that a *Memorial Volume* will be issued, as soon as possible, containing a complete report of all the public services of the past week. Full particulars will be announced in due course.

Mrs. Spurgeon, and all the members of the bereaved family, as well as the officers and members of Tabernacle Church, as deeply grateful for the almost innumerable expressions of sympathy which they have received from all parts of the world, and all sections of the Church. They cannot attempt to acknowledge these communications personally; but through various channels they have sought to convey the assurance of their heartfelt gratitude; and Mrs. Spurgeon has written a special "Message of Thanks" for the March issue of *The Sword and the Trowel*, which will be a Memorial number, containing all that can be recorded at present concerning its late beloved Editor. Mrs. Spurgeon continues to be very graciously upheld under her sore bereavement; but she is not yet strong enough to return home.

This address will be issued next week, completing the series relating to the late Mr. W. Olney. Many friends may wish to preserve the whole set; they can readily do so, as the four discourses will be included in the February part of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Price 5d.; post free, 6d.). The funeral address to be published next week, will come to many with a peculiarly solemn sacredness just now, for a considerable portion of it was *revised by Mr. Spurgeon with his own hand*. With it the publishers will give a portrait of the beloved preacher, and also a portrait of the late Mr. W. Olney.

LIVING, LOVING, LASTING UNION**Funeral Address**

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, February 28th, 1892.

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Funeral of Mr. William Olney,

October 22nd, 1890.

With new portraits of

Pastor C. H. Spurgeon

and

Mr. William Olney

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones”

— Ephesians 5:30

Before the funeral, at Norwood Cemetery, of the late Mr. William Olney, senior deacon of the church at the metropolitan Tabernacle, a service was held in the Tabernacle. The building was crowded with sympathizing friends, who came to testify the affection they bore to the beloved deacon who had been so suddenly called from their midst. The senior Pastor presided.

The hymn, “They are gathering homeward one by one,” was sung, and Pastor James A. Spurgeon offered prayer. The hymn “why do we mourn departing friends?” followed, and C.H. Spurgeon then read and expounded 1 Corinthians 15: The Revelation Burman Cassin, Rector of St. George’s. Southwark, briefly engaged in prayer, and the assembly sang the thirty-fourth Psalm, in the version beginning —

“Through all the changing scenes of life,
 In trouble and in joy,
 The praises of my God shall still
 My heart and tongue employ.”

The hymn commencing, “For ever with the Lord!” was sung, and a concluding prayer was offered by Mr. James Spurgeon.

Pastor C.H. Spurgeon then rose, and said: — As I am in a very unfit condition to speak to you this morning, I shall try for once to keep away from my subject; for if I dwell upon it; it will master me, and I shall not be able to speak to you at all. I am trying to suppress my feelings, that I may be able to find words.

I am going to speak about the favorite expression of my brother William Olney, which he frequently used in prayer. I wonder whether you will agree with me as to what it was. As my memory serves me, I have heard him a score of times, at least, use the following sentence when he drew very near to the Lord his God in prayer. He said, “*Lord Jesus, we are one with thee. We feel that we have a living, loving, lasting union with thee.*” I think that you must remember that gem of his. Those three words have stuck by me; and ever since he has gone, I have found myself repeating them to myself quite involuntarily — “a living, loving, lasting union.” He owed everything to that. He consciously enjoyed a living, loving, lasting union with the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you and I have that, we have all that we want for time and for eternity. If we have it not, we have nothing. Take any one of us by himself alone; he is lost, ruined, and undone. Take that same person linked with Christ by a living, loving, lasting union, and he is a saint — saved, sanctified, and sure to be glorified.

I have taken for my text the words which occur in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the thirtieth verse. Concerning our Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul says, “*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*”

“We”, that is his believing people, “are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones.” He is our Head, and we are the members of the body, and so we are joined to him by a living, loving, lasting union.

I am not going beyond those three words; they shall be my three points, but at the same time I will keep to my text.

I. BETWEEN THE BELIEVER AND CHRIST THERE IS A LIVING UNION. There was just that between my brother William Olney and his Lord. A living union! When he joined the church of Christ, he did not offer it the distinguished honour of his name, and then slip away, and give his life to politics, or to business, or to amusement; but when the church has his name on its roll, it receive the whole of the man, body, soul, and spirit; and this because there was life in him.

His union to Christ was not nominal, but actual. He was not merely covered with the Christian name, but he had the Christian spirit and the Christian life within him. Yes, his union to Christ was a living union; not merely that of reliance, by which the stone leans upon the foundation; though he had that, for never man, understood more clearly the doctrine of faith in Christ. Christ was his only trust and confidence, and he came to him as the stones come home to the foundation stone. But it was a living union in his case, for the fruits of life were produced. It was the union of the branch to the stem in that blessed vine which Christ himself, even as he says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

Now what does this living union to Christ mean?

It means, first of all, *Christ's life laying hold of us*. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." He is full of life, and when he takes hold of us, and raises our life into his, there is truly a living union between him and us.

But, further, this living union is *Christ's life in us*. It is given to him, not only to take us in our feebleness; but it is his divine prerogative to impart life to us, and to call dead men, and to make them live. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." This is how we come to have life in connection with him. His life flows into us, as out of the tree into the branches: so that we can truly say, with the apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith to the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The living union begins with our Lord's life, and then that life flows into us, and we begin to live also.

It was so with our friend, whom we so sadly miss from our midst to-day. A new life, a life of holiness, a life of service, a life of communion with God, began in him, by oneness with Christ, and it was continued in him by the same means. There was a living union: the life of Christ had begotten life in him, and this was seen continually in the fruit that he bore. I should not know, if I had to describe my departed brother, which word to associate most fully with him, “life” or “love.” He was as full of life as ever he could be. He used to amaze me by his energy — I mean not merely physical or even mental energy, but his never-ceasing, overflowing spiritual energy. If any of us were dull, *he* never was; and he would not let us be dull for long. He would often tell us, when we were not well, that he thought we looked amazingly well, and he would try to cheer us up somehow or other, for he himself never seemed to lack for life, or fire, or force. I might almost say that, up to the last moment, he was energetic; he died full of life. He was intense in the very highest degree until struck down; and he was thus intense, not because of mere mental activity, but because of the burning zeal for God that was in his soul, and this zeal was the result of his living union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of this life of Christ which was in him, he bore suffering without flinching. If there was anything that could equal the industry of his work; it was the heroism of his patience. He has often amazed us by his fortitude. We have admired the way in which he has triumphed in Christ in spite of his sufferings; but we have felt that we could scarcely hope to imitate him to the letter. He went as far in the way of bearing pain with patience as he went in the direction of serving Christ with enthusiasm; and this is saying a very great deal for any man. Therefore I do not say it for the man; but in praise of the grace of God which helped him, whether he was active or passive, still to be buoyant and bright because of the living union which subsisted between him and Christ. A verse of the Psalms we have just sung, which was a great favorite of his, truly describes the resolution of his life: —

“Of his deliverance I will boast,
Till all that are distress’d,
From my example comfort take,
And charm their griefs to rest.”

Christ dwelling in him in fulness could both work and suffer. The fact that Christ lives in the believer is as real as that he once lived on earth in a human body. He came then with a double-handed blessing. He came both to do his Father's will and to bear the burden of the souls of men. He was active in doing good; and when the appointed time came, he as willingly bore the burden of the sins of men, and suffered to the death without complaint. In like manner Christ lived in our dear friend, making him strong both to do and to suffer. God grant also to you and to me to have such a living union to Christ!

Do you know anything of this experience, my dear friends? Many of you do; it is your life to be one with Christ. But to some of you I must be talking an unmeaning jargon. O souls, if the life of Christ is not in you, you are dead while you live, and you will die for ever when you die! Unless you get linked to Christ, you will be driven from the presence of God, and away from all that makes true life and joy. Lay hold on Christ, and you will "lay hold on eternal life"; for he is "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us," and living contact with him is our only hope either for the present or for the future. If you are vitally joined to Christ, it is well with your soul; but if you are divided from Immanuel, and have no living union to Christ, there is no eternal life for you. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

"Living or dying, Lord,
I ask but to be thine,
My life in thee, thy life in me,
Makes heaven for ever mine."

II. The next word to "living", in my dear brother's frequent use, was "loving." BETWEEN THE TRUE BELIEVER AND CHRIST THERE IS A LOVING UNION. And oh, the union of a soul to Christ is made so sweet because it is as loving as it is living! My brother William Olney truly loved. He seemed to have a love to everybody. He never was so pleased as when he was pleasing other people; and he would go a long way, sometimes, to try and please people who would not be pleased. But still, his great ambition in life was to love others, and to make others love Christ. Love ruled supreme in his actions. His union to Christ was not cold, and formal, stiff and narrow; he had a union to Christ that was warm,

human, intense, fervent, loving. There was fire in that man, and the fire was the ardent flame of great affection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to have a talk about this loving union to Christ on some other occasion, when I could trust myself more than I can do now at this very solemn service. Still, there are a few things that may be said upon this subject even now.

Christ's love to us begins this loving union. Its source is not in ourselves; but in love eternal, love immeasurable, love which caused itself, free-grace love, love to the unworthy, love to enemies, love to those who had no life, no strength, and no hope apart from him. Christ loved us so that he designed to join himself to us in eternal union. The great Artesian well from which we drink, and which has tapped the divine fountains, is the love of Christ. This is where all our hope, and our joy, and our love begin. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." In connection with this same truth of union with Christ, and fruitbearing as the result of it, our Lord himself says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." When this love thus made choice of us, he entered into covenant with his Father concerning his people; and before we were born he identified himself with us, so that in the purpose of God from all eternity we were accepted in him. But union with us meant union with our sins; and though the Son of God could never be overcome of evil, or become a sharer in human guilt, yet by the blessed mystery of his unity with his people, he could take their sin upon himself, and bear it in his own body on the tree. Thus, as there is no past or future to the eyes of him before whom all events are spread out in one eternal "now", the Son of God was able to atone for the iniquities of those who, through all the ages, would be truly joined to him. His love that chose us did not shrink back from the awful payment which our debt rendered necessary: it was stronger than death, and mightier than the grave. Many waters could not quench it; many floods could not drown it; nor will it cease to exert its blessed influence over us until it shall bring us home to the mansions above; and not even then, for Christ's love is everlasting. By this loving union Christ brings us safely through all the temptations of life; the ransomed spirits of such as are joined to him are taken to be with Christ the instant they are absent from the body; and at last out of the tomb that same love shall call the body, and on the glad day of resurrection it shall be clearly seen how wonderful is the love which

made our Lord so one with us. This, then, is the way in which we came to a loving union with Christ; he began to love us with a love that had no beginning, which has no measure, and which shall know no change nor end, and therefore he united himself to us for ever. Well might Kent praise the name of the Lord for the wonders wrought by such love as this as he sang:

“Heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus,
 Long ere time its race begun;
 To his name eternal praises!
 Oh! What wonders love hath done!
 One with Jesus
 By eternal union one.”

Our love to Christ completes this loving union. We first learn of his love to us, and then as the result of that, we are brought to love him. Ours is a poor little love, not worthy of his acceptance; but, such as it is, we give it all to him; and he will not refuse it, or despise it. Oh, that we all might be joined to Christ in love now! I am sure that my brother, who has gone from us, knew this union more than most of us. When we once got upon this glorious theme in private conversation, or when he touched upon it himself in his own public prayers, how his spirit seemed to burn and glow! He was always at home when speaking of the love of Christ, or of the love of Christ’s people to their Lord. He could truly say, as I trust many of us will truly say now, —

“I give my heart to thee,
 O Jesus, most desired!
 And heart for heart the gift shall be,
 For thou my soul hast fired:

Thou hearts alone would’st move,
 Thou only hearts dost love;
 I would love thee as thou lov’st me,
 O Jesus most desired!”

In this loving union, *Christ’s love to us and our love to Christ flow in the same channel.* Together they make a stream of love of a glorious kind. We love one another for Christ’s sake; we love sinners for Christ’s sake. We

love the truth as Christ loves the truth. We love the Father in the same manner that Christ loves the Father, though not to the same degree. There is, in fact, but one love in the Head and in all the members. What the Head loves all the body loves. As one man we go with Christ. Being united to him, his desires and longings become our desires and longings too; we grow into his likeness, and “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Do you know anything about loving union to Christ? I feel sure that the great mass of those assembled here both know it and rejoice in it. Oh, to know it more! Oh, that his love were shed abroad more richly in our hearts! Now, by the Holy Ghost that is given to us, may we experience, not only the tiny rivulets of love that some of us have had in the past days, but may we get to the torrents of love, may we be swept away by it, till, like a mighty ocean, it covers all our nature, and becomes to us a very heaven begun below!

III. Our third part is that, BETWEEN THE TRUE BELIEVERS AND CHRIST THERE IS A LASTING UNION. The whole phrase which our dear departed friend used so frequently was “living, loving, lasting union.” O friends, what a sad thing it would be for anyone to have only a temporary union with Christ! If I am speaking to any who were members of this church years ago, but who are not even professors now — if I am addressing some who seemed to be earnest Christians once, but who have gone back from following Christ — I would earnestly remind you that no union with Christ is living and loving unless it is also lasting.

The man who is truly united to Christ does not become apostate. It is all in vain to seem to put on Christ for a time, and then, after a little while, to put him off again. That is the religion of the hypocrite, or of the merely temporary professor. But not so was it with our dear brother who is sleeping yonder. When he joined the church — I think that it is rather more than fifty-four years ago—he gave himself to the Lord, and he has been kept and sustained and upheld until now. Why, there are some of you who have been members of four or five denominations during that time! You have changed your views with the varying seasons, and have altered oftener than we care to remember, while here was he, keeping steadfast and immovable all the time, remaining ever a member of the same church, and going on steadily with his work. It seems to me that some of you build for

a year, and pull down, then build again, and pull down once more. Why, you are not building at all unless your building stands; and you are not truly in union with Christ unless the union is lasting union; and it will not be unless it is a living union! Your profession of Christ will be a lie, and will help to sink you lower than the lowest hell unless you endure to the end. Make sure work with what you do in religion. Do not play at being a Christian. If you are converted, be converted with your whole heart. If you have faith in Christ, have vital faith, or do not pretend to have any. Be real; be true to the core. Be satisfied with nothing short of that union which the Spirit of God works in the hearts of those who, without reserve, yield to his power; else that which you seem to have will not be a lasting thing with you, and at the end you will be utterly cast off.

Now think of the joy of this fact. *Our union with Christ is not only lasting, it is everlasting.* With great boldness we utter the challenge. “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” It is true that we hold Christ, and that we will hold him tighter still; but the greater mercy is that he holds us, and he will never let us go. Does he not say concerning his sheep, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand”? And will he not be true to his word? You may take Christ from our hand, but you cannot take us from Christ’s hand; he holdeth us fast; he is married to us, and he himself declares, “The Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away.” He will have no divorce between our soul and himself. This living, loving, lasting union, which we have already found to be such a glorious reality, is to last for ever and ever, blessed be the name of the Lord!

I want you, beloved friends, to draw much comfort from this truth, and then I will have done. *Christ will not lose his members.* My head would not willingly lose a little finger, and Christ our Head will not lose one of us if “we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Think you that Christ can be mutilated? Think you that he will lose even the least joint of the least finger? Never shall that be true. The word written of his body of flesh is equally true concerning his mystical body, which is his church. “A bone of him shall not be broken.” Not even the smallest and most insignificant believer in Christ shall be lost, else would his body be incomplete. He is a perfect Christ, and you that are members of his body

shall never be cut away from his by the wounds of Satan's sword, the surgery of infidelity, or any earthly accident or diabolical temptation. If you are one with him, you will be one with him for ever, for the union between you and your Lord is an eternal union, and to break it would be to disfigure and mutilate the Christ of God.

Furthermore, in that we are one with Christ, *he will raise our bodies*. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" and, though I do not insist upon it, this verse has to me a kind of ring about it, which would lead us to believe that if we are members of his body, he will taken even our bodies to be members of himself. Christ will not leave our brother in the grave. His body will see corruption; but the tomb shall only be like a refining pot, to separate the precious from the vile. When Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, he said, "There shall not a hoof be left behind;" and when that One who is greater than Moses shall bring forth his people from their graves, there shall not a bone or a piece of a bone of his redeemed be left in the region of death. When the angel brought Peter out of prison, he told him to put his shoes on. "Bind on thy sandals," was the angelic direction. He would not leave even an old pair of slippers in the prison when he brought Peter out. The deliverance was to be absolutely complete. Thus, too, when Christ shall bid us put on our garments which he shall prepare for us in the resurrection, no integral part of the man shall be left behind. O grave, thou must give up thy prey! O death, thou must yield up thy spoils! Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore they as well as our souls must be set free from the power of the last enemy. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words," whether it be concerning your own death, or the death of this dear friend, on whose coffin we look just now.

Beloved, we are parting with our brother, William Olney, for a while; but *we shall meet again*. We are so one with each other in truth and experience, that we cannot be separated. He was a member of Christ's body, and of his flesh, and of his bones; so am I; and so are you, my fellow-believer. The members of one body must be one. And we shall meet our departed friend again before long. Perhaps another week, some of us may see his face. I wonder what he has been doing already in that land of light and liberty. Mr. Fullerton writes me, saying that he would not wonder if he spent last Sunday telling the spirits above how he had spent the Sunday

previous, and making them all wonder at what the grace of God had done among poor sinners down here on earth. He could tell the tale of Haddon Hall, and of this Tabernacle, recounting the story of what the Lord has done in saving men and women; and I do not think the angels and the redeemed could be better occupied than in hearing what the Lord has been doing in his new creation here below. Very probably the conjecture is right, for the grace of God reaches us “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” When they hear the story yonder, they will take down their harps, and raise new hallelujahs to God, and to the Lamb. Think not that I talk strangely. The angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, and they will yet more rejoice when one messenger. Newly come from the midst to God’s salvation — work, shall tell the, of scores that have been brought to the Saviour’s feet.

Beloved friends, *eternity is ours*; and a joyous eternity it will be to those who are one with Jesus Christ, in “living, loving, lasting union.” We shall ascend to “the realms of the blest” soon. There is a ladder waiting for us to climb; and when we mount it, we shall have no reason to mourn. It is but for a little time that we shall have to keep the night-watches. The watchman of the night doth cry, “The morning cometh.” The night of weeping will soon be past. “Until the day beaks, and the shadows flee away,” be of good courage. Patiently hope, “and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” He will surely come again; and even the tears of to-day shall be recompensed to you abundantly.

I pray that every blessing may rest upon every mourner this day. Indeed, dear friends, while we mourn with you, we cannot but congratulate you that you have had such a husband, such a father, such a brother, as our friend who is now taken home. I will not say that you have lost him, for that would not be true. God lent him to you for a long time, and now he has taken him back. I think that it is about fifteen years ago, since, in the ordinary course of things, he might have been expected to have died; at least, so it seemed at the time he was so sick; yet with many tears and intercessions we prayed him back, and God has given him something like Hezekiah’s extra portion of life. We ought to be very thankful for that. In those fifteen years, how much has he done? How much has God done by

him for us all! Wherefore we will not sorrow so as to complain, but we will sorrow only so as to submit. The Lord be with you evermore! Amen.

On the following evening, Thursday, October 23rd, 1890, Mr. Spurgeon preached on this subject. The discourse, entitled “Members of Christ”, delivered on that occasion, was published last week.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH!

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 6th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, May 15th, 1890.

“Thou wilt say unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”

— Ezekiel 37:9

According to some commentators, this vision in the valley of dry bones may refer to three forms of resurrection. Holy Scripture is so marvellously full of meaning, that one interpretation seldom exhausts its message to us. The chapter before us is an excellent example of this fact; and supplies an illustration of several Scriptural truths.

Some think they see here a parable of the resurrection of the dead. Assuredly, Ezekiel's vision pictures what will happen in the day when “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.” No matter how dry the bones may be, the bodies of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall rise again. that which was sown shall spring up from the grave; and, in the case of the children of God, it shall wear a new glory. At the word of Christ is shall come to pass: “For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have

done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Others see here the resurrection of the almost destroyed host of Israel, which had been divided into two companies, and carried away captive into Babylon. Plague and pestilence and the sword of the Chaldean had gone far to cut off the chosen nation; but God promised to restore his people, thus mingling mercy with judgment, and again setting in the cloud the bow of his everlasting covenant. A partial fulfillment of this promise was given when, for a while, the Lord set up again the tribes of Israel at Jerusalem, and they had a happy rest before the coming of Christ. But Israel’s full restoration is yet to be accomplished. The people shall be gathered out of the graves in which, as a nation, they have so long lain buried, and shall be placed in their own land, and then will come to pass the word of Jehovah: “Then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.”

There are others who, looking beyond the literal for the spiritual teaching, see, and I think, rightly see, that here is a picture of the recovery of ungodly men from their spiritual death and corruption — a parable of the way in which sinners are brought up from their hopeless, spiritually dead condition, and made to live by the power of the Holy Ghost. I shall, at any rate, use the text in this sense, for I am not now aiming at the interpretation of prophesy, nor concerned greatly with what is to happen in the future. Neither do I wish to conduct you into the deep things of God; but I am just now thinking of practical uses to which I can put this incident, in order to stir up God’s people to deal with the Holy Spirit as he should be dealt with, and to urge the unconverted to seek the Lord, in the hope that some of them, as dead and dry as the bones in the valley of vision, may be made to live by his divine power.

Nothing gave me greater comfort, this week, than when I received a note from one saying that, last Thursday night, while I was preaching from the text “Let your soul delight itself in fatness,” she was enabled to lay hold on Christ. I had rather have such tidings than to hear the gladdest news of a worldly kind that could be brought to me. Oh, that now also some poor heart may find rest in Christ while we are talking of that divine Spirit who becomes a Comforter to all those to whom he has been first a Quickener! May he come and cause men to live, and then afterwards make them full of

gladness! It is his blessed office first to bestow life, and then to give light. Living unto God is the earliest experience of the redeemed, afterwards comes joy in God by the Holy Ghost.

I. Now, first, in using this text, as I have said, for practical purposes, I am going to make this remark upon it: **WE ARE NOTHING WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT.** I speak, my brethren, now, to you who love the souls of men. I know that there are some among you here who preach and teach with all earnestness, with broken-hearted love; and for the glory of Christ you try to bring men to believe in Jesus. In thus endeavouring to save the souls of the lost, and ruined men, you are engaged in a noble work. But I dare say that you have often felt, what I also fully realise, that you have not gone far in your holy service before you are brought face to face with the fact that, in itself, the work you propose to do is an utter impossibility. We begin our labour according to the Word of the Lord, and we prophesy. God helping us, we can do that; and, though the burden of the Lord be heavy, yet if we are told to prophesy again, we can, by his grace, do that also. We can prophesy to dry bones, or prophesy to the wind, according to God's commandment. We are not afraid of seeming to be foolish, since we know that, when "the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." But when we preach the Word, and, as the result of our preaching expect men to be saved, and so saved that we may know it, we come all of a sudden upon an iron-bound coast, and can get no further. We find that men are dead; what is wanted is that they shall be quickened; and we cannot quicken them. There are a great many things we can do — and God forbid that we should leave one of them undone! — but when we come to the creation of life, we have reached a mysterious region into which we cannot penetrate; we have entered the realm of miracles, where Jehovah reigns supreme. The prerogative to give life or to take it away must remain with the Most High; the wit and wisdom of man are altogether powerless to bestow life upon even the tiniest insect. We know of a surety, doctrinally, and we know it with equal certainty by experience, that we can do nothing towards the quickening of men apart from the Spirit of God. If he does not come, and give life, we may preach till we have not another breath left, but we shall not raise from the tomb of sin even the soul of a little child, or bring a single sinner to the feet of Christ.

How, then, should this fact affect us? Because of our powerlessness, shall we sit still, doing nothing, and caring nothing? Shall we say, ““he Spirit of God must do the work, therefore I may fold my arms, and take things easily”? Beloved, we cannot do that. Our heart’s desire and prayer for our fellow-men is that they might be saved; and we have sometimes felt that, for their sakes, we could almost be willing to be accursed, if we might bring eternal life to them. We cannot sit still: we do not believe that it was God’s intent that any truth should ever lead us into sloth: at any rate, it has not so led us; it has carried us in quite the opposite direction. Let us try to be as practical in this matter as we are in material things. We cannot rule the winds, nor create them. A whole parliament of philosophers could not cause a capful of wind to blow. The sailor knows that he can neither stop the tempest nor raise it. What then? Does he sit still? By no means. He has all kinds of sails of different cuts and forms to enable him to use every ounce of wind that comes; and he knows how to reef or furl them in case the tempest becomes too strong for his barque. Though he cannot control the movement of the wind, he can use what it pleases God to send. The miller cannot divert that great stream of water out of its channel, but he knows how to utilize it; he makes it turn his mill-wheel. Though he cannot resist the law of gravitation, for there seems to be an almost omnipotent force in it, yet he uses that law, and yokes it to his chariot. Thus, though we cannot command that mighty influence which streams from the omnipotent Spirit of God; though we cannot turn it which way we will, for “the wind bloweth where it listeth,” yet we can make use of it; and in our inability to save men, we turn to God, and lay hold of his power.

What, then, are we to do? Face to face with spiritual death, conscious of the fact that we cannot remove it, and fully aware that only the Holy Spirit can quicken dead souls, what shall we do? There are certain ways and means by which we can act properly towards this divine Person; certain attitudes of heart which it would be will for us to take up; and certain results which will follow from a clear apprehension of the true state of the case.

First, by this fact, *we must feel deeply humbled, emptied, and cut adrift from self*. Look you, sir, you may study your sermon; you may examine the original of your text; you may critically follow it out in all its bearings; you may go and preach it with great correctness of expression; but you

cannot quicken a soul by that sermon. You may go up into your pulpit; you may illustrate, explain, and enforce the truth; with mighty rhetoric you may charm your hearers; you may hold them spellbound; but no eloquence of yours can raise the dead. Demosthenes might stand for a century between the jaws of death; but the monster would not be moved by anything he or all human orators might say. Another voice than ours must be heard; other power than that of thought or suasion must be brought into the work, or it will not be done. You may organize your societies, you may have excellent methods, you may diligently pursue this course and that; but when you have done all, nothing comes of it if the effort stands by itself. Only as the Spirit of God shall bless men by you, shall they receive a blessing through you. Whatever your ability or experience, it is the Spirit of God, who must bless your labour. Therefore, never go to this service with a boast upon your lip of what you can do, or with the slightest trace of self-confidence; else will you go in a spirit which will prevent the Holy Ghost from working with or through you.

O brethren, think nothing of us who preach to you! If ever you do, our power will be gone. If you begin to suppose that such and such a minister having been blessed of God to so many thousands will necessarily be the means of the conversion of your friend, you are imputing to a son of man what belongs only to the Son of God; and you will assuredly so that pastor or that minister a serious mischief by tolerating in your heart so idolatrous a thought. We are nothing; you are nothing. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," is a message that should make us lie in the dust and utterly despair of doing anything in and of ourselves, seeing that all the power is of God alone. It will do us good to be very empty, to be very weak, to be very distrustful of self, and so to go about our Master's work.

Next, because of our absolute need of the Holy Spirit, *we must give ourselves to prayer before our work, and after our work.* A man who believes that, so what he may, no soul will be quickened apart from the work of the Spirit of God, and who has a longing desire that he may save souls, will not venture to his pulpit without prayer. He will not deliver his message without a thousand groans and cries to God for help in every sentence that he utters; and when the sermon is done, his work will not be done; it will have scarcely begun. His sermons will be but a text for

long-continued prayer. He will be crying to God continually, to anoint him with the heavenly oil. His prayer will be “Let the Spirit of God be upon me, that I may preach deliverance to the captives; else men will still remain in the prisonhouse in spite of all my toil.” And you, beloved, as you believe that doctrine, will not allow the preacher to go to his work without your prayers. You will bear him up in your supplications, feeling that your attendances at the house of God will all be vanity, and the coming together of the people will be as nothing, unless God the Holy Ghost is pleased to bless the Word. This thought will drive you to besiege the throne of grace with strong crying and tears that God would quicken the dead sons of men. If any of you are working without prayer, I will not advise you to cease your work; but I will urge you to begin to pray, not merely as a matter of form, but as the very life of your labours. Let the habit of prayer be constant with you, so that you neither begin any service for God, nor carry it on, nor conclude it, without crying to the Lord for his holy Spirit to make the work effectual by his almighty power.

We have already gathered much instruction from this truth, if we have learnt to lie low before the Lord, and before the mercy seat.

But we must go a little further. Since everything depends upon the Spirit of God, *we must be very careful to be such men as the Spirit of God can use*. We may not judge others; but have you not met with men whom you could not think the Spirit of God would be likely to bless? If a man is self-sufficient, can the Spirit of God to any large degree bless him? If a man is inconsistent in his daily life, if there is no earnestness about him, if you cannot tell when he is in character or creed, if he contradicts one day what he said the day before, if he is vain-glorious and boastful, is it likely that the Spirit of God will bless him? If any of us should become lazy, indolent, or self-indulgent, we cannot expect the Spirit, whose one end is to glorify Christ, to work with us. If we should become proud, domineering, hectoring how could the gentle Dove abide with us? If we should become despondent, having little or no faith in what we preach, and not expecting the power of the Holy Spirit to be with us, is it likely that God will bless us? Believe me, dear friends, that a vessel fit for the Master’s use must be very clean. It need not be of silver or of gold; it may be but a common earthen vessel; but it must be very clean, for our God is a jealous God. He can spy a finger-mark where our eyes could not see it,

even with a microscope; and he will not drink out of a vessel which a moment before was at the lips of Satan. He will not use us if we have been used by self, or if we have allowed ourselves to be used by the world. Oh, how clean should we be in our private life as well as in our ordinary walk and conversation! This is no small thing. See to it, my brethren and sisters, for much of the promises blessing may depend upon your carefulness.

Next, since we depend wholly upon the Spirit, *we must be most anxious to use the Word, and to keep close to the truth*, in all our work for Christ among men. The Word of God is the Holy Spirit's sword; he will not wield our wooden weapon. He will only use this true Jerusalem blade of God's own fashioning. Let us, then, set high value on the inspired Word; we shall defeat our adversaries by that sword-thrust, "It is written." So spake the Christ; and so he conquered Satan. So also the Holy Spirit speaketh. Be wise, therefore, and let your reliance be not on your own wisdom, but on the word to which you can add, "Thus saith the Lord." If our preaching is of that kind, the Holy Ghost will always set his seal to it. But if you have thought it out, and it is your own production, go, good sir, to Her Majesty's offices, and get letters patent for your invention; but the Holy Ghost will have nothing to do with it. He cares nothing about your "original mind." Our Lord Jesus laid aside all originality, and spake only the words of his Father, the words which the Holy Ghost brought to him. He said to his disciples, in that memorable discourse, before he went out to Gethsemane, "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Let us try to imitate him, being willing not to think our own thoughts, or to speak our own words, but those which God shall give to us. I would rather speak five words out of this Book than fifty thousand words of the philosophers. I had rather be a fool with God than be a wise man with the sagest scientist, for "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." You cannot work for Christ except by the Spirit of Christ, and you cannot teach for Christ except you teach Christ; your work will have no blessing upon it, unless it be God's Word spoken through your lips to the sons of men. If we want revivals, we must revive our reverence for the Word of God. If we want conversions, we must put more of God's Word into our sermons; even if we paraphrase it into our own words, it must still be his Word upon which we place our reliance, for the only power which will bless men lies in that. It is God's Word that saves souls, not our comment upon it, however

correct that comment may be. Let us, then, be scrupulously careful to honour the Holy Spirit by taking the weapon which he has prepared for us, believing in the full inspiration of the sacred Scriptures, and expecting that God will prove their inspiration by their effect upon the minds and hearts of men.

Again, since we are nothing without the Holy Spirit, *we must avoid in our work anything that is not of him*. We want these dead people raised, and we cannot raise them; only the Spirit of God can do that. Now, in our part of the work, for which God condescendingly uses us, let us take care that there is nothing which would grieve the Spirit, or cause him to go away from us. I believe that, in places where the work of conversion goes on largely, God is much more jealous than he is anywhere else. He watches his church and if he sees, in the officers of the church, or in the workers, something unholy; if he beholds practices tolerated that are not according to his pure mind; and if, when they are noticed, these evils are winked at, and still further indulged, he will withdraw his blessing until we cease to have a controversy with him. Possibly he might give his blessing to a church which was worse than this in many respects, while he might withdraw it from this church, which has already been so highly favoured, if it countenanced anything contrary to his Word. An ordinary subject her Majesty might say certain things about her for which he would never be brought to book; but a favorite at court must mind how he behaves. So must we be very sensitive in this divine employment in which we come nearest to Christ; we must be careful to co-operate with him in our work of seeing to pluck brands from the burning. We must mind how we do it, for we may, perhaps, be led to adopt ways and methods which may grieve him; and if we persevere in those ways and methods, after we have learned that they are not according to his will, the Spirit of God will leave us, lest he should seem to be setting his seal upon that of which he does not approve. A headlong zeal even for Christ may leap into a ditch. What we think to be very wise may be very unwise; and where we deem that at least a little “policy” may come in, that little policy may taint the whole, and make a nauseous stench which God will not endure. You must have the Spirit of God; you can do nothing without him; therefore do nothing that would cause him to depart from you.

Moreover, *we must be ever ready to obey the Holy Spirit's gentlest monitions*; by which I mean the monitions which are in God's Word, and also — but putting this in the second place — such inward whispers as he accords to those who dwell near to him. I believe that the Holy Spirit does still speak to his chosen in a very remarkable way. Men of the world might ridicule this truth, and therefore we speak little of it; but the child of God knows that there are at times distinct movements of the Holy Spirit upon his mind leading him in such and such ways. Be very tender of these touches of God. Some people do not feel these movements; but perhaps if they, with a more perfect heart, feared the Lord, his secret might be revealed to them. That great ship at sea will not be moved by a ripple; even an ordinary wave will not stir it; it is big and heavy. But that cork, out yonder, goes up and down with every ripple of the water. Should a great wave come, it will be raised to the crest of it, and carried wherever the current compels. Let your spirit be little before God, and easily moved, so that you may recognize every impulse of the Spirit, and obey it at once, whatever it may be. When the Holy Ghost moves thee to give up such and such a thing, yield to it instantly, lest you lose his presence; when he impels thee to fulfill such and such a duty, be not disobedient to the heavenly vision; or if he suggests to thee to praise God for such and such a favour, give thyself to thanksgiving. Yield thyself wholly to his guidance. You who are workers, do ask for the wisdom of the Spirit carefully and believingly. I do not understand a man going into the pulpit, and praying the Spirit of God to guide him in what he shall say, and then pulling it out of his pocket in manuscript. It looks to me as if he shut the Spirit of God out of any special operation; at least, all the help he can expect to have from the Spirit at that particular time must be in the manner of his reading, though of course he may have been guided in that he has written. Still there is but scant room for the Spirit to manifest his power. In the same way, if you make up your mind how you will deal with people, and what you will say, it may often happen that, in the process, if you forget all you meant to say, it would be the best thing that could happen to you; and if you said exactly what you did not think it would be prudent to say; the unaccustomed method might be the thing the Spirit of God would bless. Keep yourself, therefore, before that valley of dry bones free to do just what the Spirit of God would have you do, that he, through you, may raise the dead.

Once more: since, apart from the Spirit, we are powerless, *we must value greatly every movement of his power*. Notice, in this account of the vision in the valley, how the prophet draws attention to the fact of the shaking and the noises, and the coming of the sinews and the flesh, even before there was any sign of life. I think that, if we want the Spirit of God to bless us, we must be on the watch to notice everything he does. Look out for the first desire, the first fear! Be glad of anything happening to your people that looks as if it were the work of the Holy Spirit; and, if you value him in his earlier works, he is likely to go on and to do more and more, till at last he will give the breath, and the slain host shall arise, and become an army for God. Only you cannot expect the Spirit of God to come and work by you if you are half asleep. You cannot expect the Spirit of God to put forth his power if you are in such a condition that, if he saved half your congregation, you would not know it, and if he saved nobody, you would not fret about it. God will not bless you when you are not all awake. The Spirit of God does not work by sleepy men. He loves to have us alive ourselves, and then he will make others alive by us. See to this, dear friends. If we had more time at our disposal, I would speak longer on this part of the subject; but I have said enough now, if God the Holy Spirit blesses it, upon this first great truth that we are nothing without the Holy Spirit.

II. Now, secondly, we may learn, from the action of Ezekiel on this occasion, that **WE MAY SO ACT AS TO HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT**. When he first saw the dry bones, there was no wind nor breath; yet, obeying the voice of the Lord in the vision, the breath came, and life followed. How, then, shall we act? I will only give you in brief a few of the conditions to be observed by us.

If we want the Holy Spirit to be surely with us, to give us a blessing, *we must, in the power of the Spirit, realize the scene in which we are to labour*. In this case, the Holy Spirit took the prophet, and carried him out, and set him down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. This is just a type of what will happen to every man whom the Spirit means to use. Do you want to save people in the slums? Then, you must go into the slums. Do you want to save sinners broken down under a sense of sin? You must be broken down yourself; at least, you must get near to them in their brokenness of heart; and be able to sympathize with them. I believe that

no man will command power over a people whom he does not understand. If you have never been to a certain place, you do not know the road; but if you have been there yourself, and you come upon a person who has lost his way, you are the man to direct him. When you have been through the same perplexities that trouble others, you can say to them, "I have been there myself: I know all about it. By God's blessing I can conduct you out of this maze." Dear friend, we must have greater sympathy with sinners. You cannot pluck the brand out of the burning if you are afraid of being singed yourself; you must be willing to smut your fingers on the bars of the grate if you would do it. If there is a diamond dropped into a ditch, you must thrust your arm up to your elbow in the mud, or else you cannot expect to pick the jewel out of the mire. The Holy Spirit, when he blesses a man, sets him down in the midst of the valley full of bones, and causes him to pass by then round about until he fully comprehends the greatness and the difficulty of the work to be accomplished, even as the prophet said, "Behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry."

Next, if the Holy Spirit is to be with us, *we must speak in the power of faith*. If Ezekiel had not had faith, he certainly would not have preached to dry bones; they make a wretched congregation; and he certainly would not have preached to the wind, for it must have been a fickle listener. Who but a fool would behave in this manner unless faith entered into action? If preaching is not a supernatural exercise, it is a useless procedure. God the Holy Ghost must be with us, or else we might as well go and stand on the tops of the hills of Scotland, and shout to the east wind. There is nothing in all our eloquence unless we believe in the Holy Spirit making use of the truth which we preach for the quickening of the souls of men. Our prophesying must be an act of faith. We must preach by faith as much as Noah built the ark by faith; and just as the walls of Jericho were brought down, by faith, men's hearts are to be broken by faithful preaching, that is, preaching full of faith.

In addition to this, if we desire to have the Spirit of God with us, *we must prophesy according to God's command*. By prophesying, I do not mean foretelling future events; but simply uttering the message which we have received from the Lord, proclaiming it aloud so that all may hear. You will notice how it is twice said, in almost the same words, "So I prophesied as

he commanded me.” God will bless the prophesying that he commands, and not any other; so we must keep clear of that which is contrary to his Word, and speak the truth that he gives to us to declare. As Jonah, the second time he was told to go to Nineveh, was hidden by the Lord to “preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee,” so must we do if we would have our word believed even as his was. Our message is received when it is the Word of God through us. When the Lord describes the blessing that comes upon the earth by the rain and snow from heaven, he saith, “So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.” Let us see to it that, before the word goes forth out of our mouth, we have received it from the mouth of God. Then we may hope and expect that the people will receive it also from us. The Spirit of God, that is, the breath of God, goes with the Word of God, and with that alone.

Notice, next, that if we would have the Spirit of God with us, *we must break out in vehemency of desire*. The prophet is to prophesy to the bones; but he does not begin in a formal manner by saying, “Only the winds coming can bring breath to these slain persons.” No, he breaks out with an interjection, and with his whole soul heaving with a ground-swell of great desire, he cries, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!” He has the people before him in his eye, and in his heart; and he appeals, with mighty desire, to the Spirit of God, that he would come and make them live. You will generally find, in our service to-day, that the men who yearn over the souls of their fellow-men are those whom the Spirit of God uses. A man of no desire gets what he longs for; and that is nothing at all.

Then, if we would have more of the power of the Spirit of God with us, *we must see only the divine purpose, the divine power, and the divine working*. God will have his Spirit to go forth with those who see his hand. “When I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.” It is not my plan that God is going to work out; it is his own. It is not my purpose that the Holy Spirit is going to carry out; it is the purpose of the eternal Jehovah. It is not my power, or my experience, or my mode of thought, which will bring men from death to life; it is the Holy Spirit who will do it, and he only. We

must apprehend this fact, and get to work in this spirit, and then God the Holy Spirit will be with us.

III. Bear with me, if I fill up all my time, or if I should even stray beyond it. I want now to address unconverted persons, or those who are afraid that they are still unsaved; and with the text before us, **WE WOULD SPEAK HOPEFULLY TO OUR HEARERS.**

You who are not yet quickened by the divine life, or are afraid you are not, *we would exhort you to hear the Word of the Lord.* Though you feel that you are as dead as these dry bones, yet if you want to be saved, be frequent in hearing the Word. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” If you wish to find the divine life, thank God that you have that wish, and frequent those houses where Christ is much spoken of, and where the way of eternal life is very plainly set forth. When you mingle with the worshippers, listen with both your ears; try to remember what you hear; and pray all the while that God will bless it to you. “O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord!”

Next, *we could remind you of your absolute need of life from the Spirit of God.* Put it in what shape you like, you cannot be saved except you are born again; and the new birth is not a matter within your own power. “Ye must be born again,” — “from above,” as the margin reads, in the third chapter of John’s gospel. All the religion of which you are capable will not save you, do what you will; strive as you may with outward ceremonies, or religious observances, there is no hope for you but in the Holy Ghost. There is something to be done for you which you cannot do for yourself. We will not water down that truth, but give it to you just as it stands in the Scriptures; we want you to feel its power.

But *we would have you note what the Holy Spirit has done for others.* There are some of your friends who have been born again. They were as hopeless as you are; but they are now saved. You know they are, for you have seen their lives. Take note of them, for what the Holy Spirit can work in one he can work in another. Let the grace of God in others comfort you concerning yourself, especially when you hear of great drunkards, or great swearers, or very vicious persons, who have been transformed into saints. Say to yourself, “If the Holy Spirit could make a saint out of such a sinner as that, surely he can make a saint out of me.” As you see the flesh and

sinews on others who were once as dry as bare bones, be encouraged to hope that it may be even so with you ere long.

May I go a little further, and say that, *we would have you observe carefully what is done in yourself?* I think I am speaking to some here who have already undergone a remarkable change. You cannot say that you have spiritual life; you are afraid that you have not. Still, you are not what you used to be. You have put away many things from you that were once a pleasure to you, and now you take delight in many things which you once despised. There is some hope in that, though it may be nothing more than the sinews coming on the bones, and the flesh upon the sinews. Yet I notice that, where the Holy Ghost begins, he does not leave off till he has finished his work. God takes such a delight in his work, that, having begun it, he completes it. Well did Job say, “Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” Now, what he has done for you already, encourages me, and should encourage you, to hope that he will yet do much more, continuing his gracious work until life eternal is bestowed upon you.

Furthermore, *we would remind you that faith in Jesus is a sign of life.* If in your heart you can trust yourself to Christ, and believe in him that he can save you, you have eternal life already. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” If thou canst now, though it be for the first time, trust thyself alone on Christ, faith is the surest evidence of the work of the Holy Ghost. Thou “hast passed from death unto life” already. Thou canst not see the Spirit any more than thou canst see the wind; but, if thou hast faith, that is a blessed vane that turns in the way the Spirit of God blows. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” If thou believest, this is true of thee, and if thou dost cast thyself wholly upon Christ, remember that it is written, “He that believeth on him is not condemned;” wherefore be of good cheer.

We beg you not to be led aside to the discussion of difficulties. There are a great many difficulties. To tell dry bones to live, is a very unreasonable sort of thing when tried by rules of logic; and for me to tell you, a dead sinner, to believe in Christ, may seem perfectly unjustifiable by the same rule. But I do not need to justify it. If I find it in God’s Word, that is quite enough for me; and if the preacher does not feel any difficulty in the matter, why should you? There is a difficulty, but you have nothing to do with it. There are difficulties everywhere. There is a difficulty in explaining

how it is that bread sustains your body; and how that bread, sustaining your body, can be the means of prolonging your life. We cannot understand how the material can impinge upon the spiritual; and there are difficulties in almost everything connected with life. If a man will not do anything till he has solved every difficulty, we had better dig his grave. And you will be in hell if you will not go to heaven without having every difficulty solved for you. Leave the difficulties; there will be time enough to settle them when we get to heaven; meanwhile, if life comes through Jesus Christ, let us have it, and have done with nursing our doubts.

Further, *we would have you long for the visitation of God, the Holy Spirit.* Join with us in the prayer, "Come Holy Spirit, come with all thy power; come from the four winds, O breath!" One wind will not do it, it must come from all quarters. Your heart, filled with all sorts of evil, wants breaking; it wants throwing down like the house of Job's son when Job's children were in it, and "there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell." Oh, for a wind from the four quarters of heaven, to smite the four corners of the house of your sin, and lay it low! "Come from the four winds, O breath!" As the poet sings

"Lifeless in the valley,
Come, O breath, and breathe!
New-create and rally!
Come, O breath, and breathe!"

Blowing where thou listest,
Thou the word assistest,
Thou death's power resistest,
Come, O breath, and breathe!"

Be willing to have the Holy Spirit as he wills to come. Let him come as a north wind, cold and cutting, or as a south wind, sweet and melting. Say, "Come, from any of the four winds, O breath! Only come." He can come unexpectedly upon you in the pew during these five minutes that remain. You are perhaps thinking about whether you can catch an early train, and get home. May the Holy Spirit lay hold of you before you leave the building, and get you home in real earnest to you God and to your Father! He can come very mightily. There is a great deal about you that would

shut him out. But it is hard to keep the wind out when it blows in the fulness of its strength. You may fill up the crevices of the door as you please, but still the wind gets in. Thus, too, is it with the Spirit of God: he comes in might; and he can also come very sweetly. Be not afraid of the Holy Spirit. He can charm you to Christ, as well as drive you to Christ. May he enter your heart even now!

We yearn to see all of you thus made to live. I am praying in my very soul that he would come to every one of you. I do not read that Ezekiel saw part of the valley of dry bones live, and the rest remain dry bones; but that they all lived, and stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. I long to see you all blessed at this service. Why should it not be so? Oh, that the Spirit of God would come and touch everyone of us! Many of you are alive already, blessed be his name! Well, you can have more life, for Christ has come not only that you might have life, but that you “might have it more abundantly.” Let the blessed Spirit enter into greater fulness, I beseech you. But pray mightily, that every soul here that is dead may now feel the sacred breath, and begin to live. Then I shall not only hear of one, as last Thursday, but news shall be brought of many upon whom the divine Spirit has sweetly come and led them to Jesus, to be saved now, and to be saved for ever. God grant it! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Ezekiel 37.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 464, 461, 451.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

EVEN NOW

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 27th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-day Evening, February 8th, 1891.

“Even now.”

— John 11:22

I hope that there are a great many persons here who are interested in the souls of those around them. We shall certainly never exercise faith concerning those for whose salvation we have no care. I trust, also, that we are diligent in looking after individuals, especially those who are amongst our own family and friends. This is what Martha did; her whole care was for her brother. It is often easier to have faith that Christ can save sinners in general, than to believe that he can come into our own home, and save some particular member of our household. But, oh, the joy when this comes to pass; when we are able to kneel beside some of our loved ones, and rejoice with them in being made alive by the power of the Holy Ghost! We cannot expect to have this privilege, however, unless like Martha we send our prayers to Jesus, and go to meet him, and tell him of our need. In the presence of Christ it seems very natural to trust him even at the worst extremity. It is when we are at our wits' end that he delights to help us. When our hopes seem to be buried, then it is that God can give a resurrection. When our Isaac is on the altar, then the heavens are opened, and the voice of the Eternal is heard. Art thou giving way to despair concerning thy dear friend? Art thou beginning to doubt thy Saviour, and

to complain of his delay? Be sure that Jesus will come at the right time, though he must be the judge of which is the best time for him to appear.

Martha had a fine faith. If we all had such an honest belief in Christ as she had, many a man, who now lies dead in his sins, would, ere long, hear that voice which would call him forth from his tomb, and restore him unto his friends. Martha's faith had to do with a dreadful case. Her brother was dead, and had been buried, but her faith still lived; and in spite of all things which went against her, she believed in Christ, and looked to him for help in her extremity. Her faith went to the very edge of the gulf, and she said, "But I know, that *even now*, whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee."

Still, Martha had not so much faith as she thought she had. But a few hours after she had confessed her confidence in the power of the Lord Jesus, or perhaps it was only a few minutes, she stood at the grave of her brother, and evidently doubted the wisdom of him she professed to trust. She objected to the stone being removed; and, strong in the admitted facts of the case, she urged her reason and said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh." Well, but, Martha, you said, not very long ago, "I know that even now Christ can interpose." Yes, she said it, and she believed it in the way in which most of us believe; but when her faith was sharply tried by a matter of fact, she did not appear to have had all the faith she professed. I suspect this also is true of most of us. We often fancy our confidence in Christ is much stronger than it really is. I think I have told you of my old friend, Will Richardson, who said, when he was seventy-five years of age, that it was a very curious thing, that all the winter through, he had thought he should like to be a-harvesting, or out in the hay-field, because he felt so strong. He imagined that he could so as much as any of the youngsters. "But," he said, "do you know, Mr. Spurgeon, when the summer comes, I do not get through the haymaking; and when the autumn comes, I find I have not sufficient strength for reaping?" So it often is in spiritual things. When we are not called upon to bear the trouble, we feel wonderfully strong; but when the trial comes, very much of our boasted faith is gone in smoke. Take heed that ye examine well your faith; let it be true and real, for you will need it all.

However, Christ did not take Martha at her worst, but at her best. When our Lord says, "According to your faith be it unto you," he does not mean

“According to your faith in its ebb,” but “According to your faith in its flood.” He reads the thermometer at its at its highest point, not at its lowest; not even taking the “mean temperature” of our trust. He gives us credit for our quickest pace; not counting our slowest, nor seeking to discover our average speed in this matter of faith. Christ did for Martha all she could have asked or believed; her brother did rise again, and he was restored to her, and to his friends. In thy case, too, O thou trembling, timorous believer, the Lord Jesus will take thee at thy best, and he will do for thee great things, seeing that thou desirest to believe greatly, and that thy prayer is, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!”

The point upon which Martha chiefly rested, when she expressed her faith, was the power of Christ in intercession with his Father. “I know,” said she, “that, even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” Since the omnipotence of God could be claimed, she felt no anxiety as to the greatness of the request. “Whatsoever” was asked could easily be gained, if it was only asked by him who never was denied. Beloved in the Lord, our Christ is still alive, and he is still pleading. Beloved in the Lord, our Christ is still alive, and he is still pleading. Can you believe, even now, that whatever he shall ask of God, God will give it him, and give it you for his dear Son’s sake? What an anchorage is the intercession of Christ! “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Here is a grand pillar to rest the weight of our souls upon: “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Surely, we may have great faith in him who never wearies, and who never fails; who lives, indeed, for no other purpose than to plead for those who trust in his dying love, and in his living power. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Fall back upon the intercessory power of Christ in every time of need, and you will find comfort that will never fail you.

It is a grand thing to have faith for the present, not bemoaning the past, nor dreaming of some future faith which we hope may yet be ours. The present hour is the only time we really possess. The past is gone beyond recall. If it has been filled with faith in God, we can no more live on that faith now than we can live to-day on this bread we ate last week. If, on the

contrary, the past has been marred by our unbelief, that is no reason why this moment should not witness a grand triumph of trust in the faithful Saviour. Let us not excuse our present lack of faith by the thought of some future blessing. No confidence which we may learn to put in Christ, in the days to come, can atone for our present unbelief. If we ever mean to trust him, why should we not do so now, since he is as worthy of our belief now as he will ever be, and since what we miss now we miss beyond recall.

“The present, the present, is all thou hast
For thy sure possessing,
Like the patriarch’s angel, hold it fast,
Till it gives its blessing.”

In this verse, “I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee,” I want to fix your attention only on the two words, “Even now.” We have just sung —

“Pass me not, O tender Saviour,
Let me love and cling to thee;
I am longing for thy favour;
When thou comest, call for me:
Even me.”

Our hymn was “Even me.” The sermon is to be “Even now.” If you have been singing “Even me,” and so applying the truth to your own case, say also, with an energy of heart that will take no denial, “Even now,” and listen with earnest expectation to that gospel which is always in the present tense: “While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation.” Remember, too, that this is not only the preacher’s word, for the Holy Ghost saith, “To-day”: “Even now.”

I shall use these words, first, in reference *to those who are concerned about the souls of others*, as Martha was about her dead brother. Believe that Christ can save even now. Then I shall speak *to you who are somewhat concerned about your own souls*. You believe, perhaps, that Christ can save. I want you to be persuaded that he can save you even now; that is to say, at this exact hour and minute, going by the clock, while you hear these words, even now, Christ can forgive; even now, Christ can save; even now, Christ can bless.

I. First, CAN WE BELIEVE THIS WITH REFERENCE TO OTHERS? If you are in the same position as Martha, I can bring out several points of likeness which should encourage you to persevere. You, mother, have prayer for your boy; you, father, have pleaded for your girl; you, dear wife, have been much in prayer for your husband; you beloved teacher, have frequently brought your class before God; and yet there is a bad case pressing upon your mind, and your heart is heavy about some dear one, whose condition seems hopeless. I want you to believe that now, even now, Christ can grant your prayer, and save that soul; that now, even now, he can give you such a blessing that the past delay shall be more than recompensed to you.

There is one, for instance, in whom we are deeply interested, and we can say that *the case has cost great sorrow*. So Martha could have said of Lazarus. "Blessed master", she might have said, "my brother took the fever" — (for I should think it was a fever that he had) — "and I watched him; I brought cold water from the well, and I laved his burning brow; I was by his bedside all night. I never took off my clothes. Nobody knows how my heart was wrung with anguish as I saw the hot beaded drops upon his brow, and tried to moisten his parched tongue and lips. I sorrowed as though I was about to die myself; but in spite of all that, I believe even now that thou canst help me; even now." Alas! There are many griefs in the world like this. A mother says, "Nobody knows what I have suffered through that son of mine. I shall die of a broken heart because of his conduct." "No one can tell," says the father, "what grief that daughter of mine has caused me. I have sometimes wished that she had never been born." There have been many, many such stories told into my ear, in which a beloved one has been the cause of anguish and agony untold to gracious, loving hearts. To those so sorely troubled I now speak. Can you believe that *even now* the living Intercessor is "mighty to save"? It may be that you are at this moment trembling on the verge of the blessing you so long have sought. God give you faith to grasp it "even now"!

With other persons we are met with a fresh difficulty. *The case has already disappointed us*. That is how some of you have found it, is it not? "Yes," you say, "I have prayed long for a dear friend, and I believed, some time ago, that my prayer was heard, and that there was a change for the better; indeed, there was an apparent change; but it came to nothing." You

are just like Martha. She kept saying to herself, "Christ will come. Brother is very ill, but Jesus will come before he dies; I know he will. It cannot be that he will stay away much longer; and when he comes, Lazarus will soon be well." Day after day, Mary and she sent their messenger to look toward the Jordan, to see if Jesus was not coming. But he did not come. It must have been a terrible disappointment to both these sisters; enough to stagger the strongest faith that had ever had in the sympathy of Christ. But Martha got the better of it, and she said, "Even now, though disappointed so bitterly, I believe that thou canst so whatsoever thou wilt." Learn from Martha, my discouraged brother. You thought that your friend was converted, but he wanted to go back again; you thought that there was a real work of grace upon his heart, but it turned out to be a mere disappointment, and disappeared, like the mist of the sun. But can you not believe over the head of your disappointment, and say, "I believe even now, even now"? Blessed shall your faith be, if it gets so far.

Perhaps further difficulties have met us. We have attempted to help someone, and *the case has proved our helplessness*. "Ah, yes," says one, "that exactly describes me. I never felt so helpless in my life. I have done all that I can do, and it amounts to nothing. I have been careful in my example. I have been prayerful in my words. I have been very patient and longsuffering. I have tried to induce my beloved one to go and listen to the gospel here and there. I have put holy books in his way, and all the while, I have seized opportunities to plead with him, often with tears in my eyes, and I can do nothing! I am dead beat." Yes, that is just where Martha got to; she had done everything and nothing seemed to be of the least use. None of the medicines she applied seemed to soothe the sufferer. She had gone down to the village, perhaps to the home of Simon the leper, who was a friend of hers, and he possibly advise some new remedies; but nothing seemed to make the least difference. Her brother grew worse and worse, until she saw that, though she had nursed him back to health the last time he had been ill, she was now utterly powerless. Then he died. Yet, even though things had gone as far as that, she had faith in Christ. In like manner, your case is beyond your skill; but you cannot believe that, even now, the end of nature will be the beginning of grace; can you not even now feel that you shall find that word true, "He shall not fail"? Christ never did fail yet, and he never will. When all the doctors give a patient up,

the Great Physician can step in and heal. Can you believe concerning your friend “even now”?

But perhaps you are in a worse plight still. *The case has been given up.* I think I hear one kind, gracious soul, whose hope has been crushed, say, “Well, sir, that is just what we have come to about my boy. We held a little family meeting, and said we must get him to go away to Australia, if we can. If he will only go to America, or somewhere abroad, it will be a relief to have him out of our sight. He keeps coming home intoxicated, and gets brought before the magistrates. He is a disgrace to us. He is a shame to the name he bears. We have given him up.” Martha had come to this. She had given her brother up, and had actually buried him; yet she believed in the power of Christ. Ah, there are many people that are buried alive! I do not know that such a thing ever happens in the cemetery; but I know it happens in our streets and homes. Many are buried morally, and given up by us before God gives them up. And, somehow, it is often the given-up people that God delights to bless. Can you believe that even now, *even now*, prayer can be heard, that even now the Holy Ghost can change the nature, and that even now Christ can save the soul? Believeest thou this? I shall rejoice if thou canst, and thou too shalt rejoice ere long.

But there is still a lower depth. Here is one who is much concerned about an individual, and *the case is loathsome.* “Though we loved him once,” he says, “his character has now become such that it is pestilential to the family. He leads others astray. We cannot think of what he has done without the very memory of his life spreading a taint over our conscience, and over our mind.” There are persons alive in the world, who are just masses of living putridity. There may be such here. I should be glad if a word I said could reach them. It is a shocking thing that there are men and women, made in the image of God, with talents and ability, with capacity and conscience, who, nevertheless, seem to live for nothing else but to indulge their licentious passions, and to lead others into vices which else they had never known. There must come an awful day of reckoning to such when the Christ of God shall sit upon the throne, and shall weigh before all men the secret doings of libertines, of debauched men, and depraved women. If any of you have such a one related to you, can you believe that even now Christ can raise that one? Yours is just the same sort of case as Martha had. She could have said, “Brother is buried; worse than

that, he stinketh." She did not like to say that of dear Lazarus, her own brother, but she could not help saying it. And there are some men of whom we are compelled to say, no matter how much our love seeks to shield them, that their character stinks. But can you still believe that, even now, there is hope that God can intervene, and that grace can save? Why, my dear friend, you and I know that it is so! I do believe it; we must all believe it. If it comes to a case very near and dear to you, and you begin to be a little bit staggered, recollect what you used to be yourselves — not openly so depraved, perhaps, but inwardly, quite the same, and take hope for these foul men and women from the remembrance of what you were: "and such were some of you; but ye are washed." When John Newton used to preach at St. Mary Woolnoth, he always believed in the possibility of the salvation of the worst of his hearers; for he had been himself one of the vilest of the vile. When he was very old, and they said, "Dear Mr. Newton, you are too old to preach; you had better not go into the pulpit now," he said, "What! Shall the old African blasphemer, who has been saved by grace, leave off preaching the gospel while there is a breath in his body? Never." I think while there is breath in the body of some of us, we must go on telling the gospel; for, if it saved us, it can save the worst of sinners. We are bound to believe that even now Christ can save even the most horrible and the most vile.

"His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me."

Perhaps there is even a more desperate difficulty still with reference to someone whom we would fain see living for God. *The case is beyond our reach.* "Yes," that brother quickly answers, "now you have come to my trouble. I do not even know where my boy is; he ran away, and we have not heard from him for years. How can I help him?" Why, believe that "even now" Christ can speak to him, and save him! He can send his grace where we can send our love. The great difficulty which lies like a stone at the door of the sepulchre will not prevent him speaking the life-giving word. He has all forces at his command, and when he says the word, the stone shall be rolled away, and the son, that is lost shall be found; the dead shall be made alive again. Though you cannot reach your son, or your daughter, Christ can meet with them. "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither does his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." Though

your prodigal boy or your wandering girl be at the end of the earth, Christ can reach them, and save them. "Have faith in God." "Even now" Christ can aid you.

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, 'It shall be done.'"

I know there are some Christian people who have drifted into the terribly wicked state of giving up their relatives as hopeless. There was a brother here, who is now in heaven, a good, earnest Christian man, whose son had treated him very shockingly indeed, and the father, justly indignant, felt it right to give his son up. He had often tried to help him, but the young man was so scandalous a scapegrace that I did not wonder that the old man turned him away. But one night, as I was preaching here, I spoke in something like the same way in which I have spoken now; and the next morning the old man's arm was about his child's neck. He could not help himself; he felt he must go and find his son out, and seek again to reclaim him. It seemed to have been the appointed time for that boy's salvation, for it pleased God that within a few months that son died, and he passed away with a good hope, through grace, that he had been brought to his Saviour's feet by his father's love. If any of you have a very bad son, go after him, seeking, until by the grace of God, you shall find him. And you that have grown hopeless about your relatives, you must try not to give them up. If other people cast them off, you must not, for they are allied to you by the ties of blood. Seek them out. You are the best person in the world to seek them, and the most likely to find them, if you can believe that even now, when the worst has come to the worst, "even now," almighty grace can step in, and save the lost soul.

Oh, that some here may have faith to claim at this moment the salvation of their friends! May desire be wrought into expectancy, and hope become certainty! Like Jacob at Jabbok, my we lay hold of God, saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." To such faith the Lord will give a quick response. He that will not be denied shall not be denied. My friend, Hudson Taylor, who has done such a wonderful work for China, is an instance of this. Brought up in a godly home, he, as a young man, tried to imitate the lives of his parents, and failing in his own strength to make

himself better, he swung to the other extreme, and began to entertain skeptical notions. One day, when his mother was from home, a great yearning after her boy possessed her, and she went up to her room to plead with God that “even now” he would save him. If I remember aright, she said that she would not leave the room until she had the assurance that her boy would be brought to Christ. At length her faith triumphed, and she rose quite certain that all was well, and that “even now” her son was saved. What was he doing at that time? Having half an hour to spare, he wandered into his father’s library, and aimlessly took down one book after another to find some short and interesting passage to divert his mind. He could not find what he wanted in any of the books, so, seeing a narrative tract, he took it up with the intention of reading the story, and putting it down where the sermon part of it began. As he read, he came to the words “the finished work of Christ”, and almost at the very moment in which his mother, who was miles away, claimed his soul of God, light came into his heart. He saw that it was by the finished work of Christ that he was to be saved; and kneeling in his father’s library, he sought and found the life of God. Some days afterwards, when his mother returned, he said to her, “I have some news to tell you.” “Oh, I know what it is!” she answered, smiling, “You have given yourself to God.” “Who told you?” he asked in astonishment. “God told me,” she said, and together they praised him, who, at the same moment, gave faith to the mother, and the life to the son, and who has since made him such a blessing to the world. It was the mother’s faith, claiming the blessing “even now”, that did it. I tell you this remarkable incident that many others may be stirred up to the same immediate and importunate desire for the salvation of their children and relatives. There are some things we must always pray for with submission as to whether it is the will of God to bestow them upon us: but for the salvation of men and women we may ask without fear. God delights to save and to bless; and when the faith is given to us to expect an immediate answer to such a prayer, thrice happy we are. Seek such faith even now, I beseech you, “even now.”

II. But, in the second place, I want to speak very earnestly to any here who are concerned about their own souls. Jesus came to save you “even now.” CAN WE BELIEVE THIS FOR OURSELVES? Can you expect the Lord, even while you hear these words, to speak to you the word of power, and bring you forth from your sleep of sin?

For some of you, *the time is late, very late; yet it is not too late*. You are getting into years, my friend. I want you to believe that even now Christ can save you. I often notice the number of old people who come to the Tabernacle. I am glad to see the aged saints; but amongst so many elderly people, no doubt, there are some unsaved sinners, whose grey hairs are not a crown of glory, but a fool's cap. But, however old you are, though you are sixty, seventy, eighty or even ninety years of age, yet "even now" Christ can give you life. Blessed be God for that! But it is not altogether the years that trouble you; it is your sins. As I have already said, if you have gone to the very extremity of sin, you may believe that, after all those years of wandering, the arms of free grace are still open to receive you "even now." There is an old proverb, "It is never too late to mend." It is ever too late for us to mend ourselves, but it is never too late for Christ to mend us. Christ can make us new, and it is never too late for him to do it. If you come to him, and trust him, he will receive you "even now."

By the longsuffering of God, *there is a time left to you*, in which you may turn to him. What a thousand mercies it is that "even now" is a time of mercy to you: it might have been the moment of your everlasting doom! You have been in accidents; you have been within an inch of the grave many times; you have been ill, seriously ill; you have been well-nigh given up for dead; and here you are yet alive, but still an enemy to God! Plucked by his hand from the fire and flood, and, mayhap, from battle; delivered from fever and cholera, and still ungrateful, still rebelling, still spending the life that grace has lent you in resisting the love of God! Long years ago you should have believed in Christ, but the text is "even now." Do not begin to say, "I believe that God could have saved me years ago;" there is no faith in that. Do not meet my earnest plea, by saying, "I believe that God can save me under such-and-such conditions." Believe that he can save you now, up in the top gallery there, just as you are. You came in here careless and thoughtless; yet, even now, he can save you. Away yonder, quite a man of the world, free and easy, destitute of all religious inclinations though you may be, he can save you even now. O God, strike many a man down, as thou did Saul of Tarsus, and change their hearts by thine own supreme love, as thou canst do it, even now, on the very spot where they sit or stand.

But though God waits to be gracious to you, though you have yet time to repent, remember, *it is but a time, therefore seize it*. Your opportunity will not last for ever. I believe that even now God can save; but if you reject Christ, there will come a time when salvation will be impossible. On earth, as long as a man desires to be saved, he may be saved: while there is life there is hope. I believe that, if a man's breath were going from his body, if he could then look to Christ, he would live. But —

“There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave, to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there.”

Do not venture on that last leap without Christ; but even now, ere the clock strikes another time, fly to Jesus. Trust him “even now.”

It is a time of hope. Even now, there is still every opportunity and every preparation for the sinner's salvation. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Shall I give you some reasons for believing that “even now” is a time of hope? There are many good arguments which may be brought forward, in order to banish the thought of despair.

First, *the gospel is still preached*. The old-fashioned gospel is not dead yet. There are a great many who would like to muzzle the mouths of God's ministers; but they never will. The old gospel will live when they are dead; and, because it is still preached to you, you may believe and live. What is the old gospel? It is that, seeing you are helpless to save yourself, or bring yourself back to God, Christ came to restore you; that he took those sins of yours, which were enough to sink you to hell, and bore them on the cross, that he might bring you to heaven. If you will but trust him, even now, he will deliver you from the curse of the law; for it is written, “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” If you will trust him, even now, he will give you a life of blessedness, which will never end; for again it is written, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Because that gospel is preached, there is hope for you. When there is no hope, there will be no presentation of the gospel. God must, by an edict, suspend the preaching of the gospel ere he can suspend the fulfillment of the gospel

promise to every soul that believeth. Since there is a gospel, take it; take it now, even now. God help you to do so!

In the second place, I know there is hope now, “even now”; for *the Christ still lives*. He rose from the dead, no more to die, and he is as strong as ever. “I am he that liveth and was dead.” He saith, “an behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen.” These words were spoken to the Apostle John, and when he saw him, he said that “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow;” but when the spouse saw him, she said, “His locks are busy, and black as a raven.” Yet both saw truly. John’s vision of the white hair was to show that Christ is the ancient of days; but the view of the spouse was to show his everlasting youth, his unceasing strength and power to save. If there is any difference in him, Christ is to-day more mighty to save than he was when Martha saw him. He had not then completed the work of salvation, but he has perfectly accomplished it now; and therefore there is hope for everyone who trusts in him. My Lord has gone up yonder where a prayer will find him, with the keys of death and hell jingling at his girdle, and with the omnipotence of God in his right hand. If you believe on him, by his “eternal power and Godhead” he will save you, and save you even now, on the spot, before you leave this house.

Moreover, I know that this is a time of hope, in the next place, because *the precious blood still has power*. All salvation is through the blood of the Lamb. Still —

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;”

and still, “even now,” —

“Sinners, plunged beneath the flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

The endless efficacy of the atoning sacrifice is the reason why you may come and believe in Jesus, “even now.” If that blood had diminished in its force, I should not dare to speak as I do; but I can, “even now,” say with confidence, —

“Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
 Shall never lose its power,
 Till all the ransomed church of God
 Be saved to sin no more.”

How many have already entered into glory by the blood of the Lamb! When a man comes to die, nothing else will do for him but this: our own works are a poor staff for us when we pass through the river. All those who are now in the land of light have but one confidence, and but one song: they stand upon the merit of Jesus Christ, and they praise the Lamb who was slain, by whose blood they have been cleansed and sanctified. There is no other way of salvation but that. “Even now: that blood has virtue to take away your sin. Christ is a sufficient Saviour, because his death has unexhausted power. Believe that he can save you “even now.”

Again, I would remind you that “even now” is a time of hope to you because *the Spirit still can renew*. He is yet at work, regenerating and sanctifying. He came down at Pentecost to dwell with his people, and has never gone back again. He is still in the church. Sometimes we feel his mighty power more than at other times, but he is always at work. Oh, you that do not know anything about the power of the Holy Ghost, let me tell you that this is the most wonderful phenomenon that can ever be observed! Those of us, who have seen and known his mighty energy, can bear testimony to it. In my retirement, at Menton, during the last few weeks, if you had seen me, you would have found me sitting every morning, at half-past nine o’clock, at my little table, with my Bible, just reading a chapter, and offering prayer, my family prayer with the little group of forty to fifty friends, who gathered for that morning act of worship. There they met, and the Spirit of God was manifestly moving among them, converting, cheering, comforting. It was because of no effort of mine; it was simply the Word, attended by the Spirit of God, binding us together, and binding us all to Christ. And here, in this house, for seven-and-thirty years, have I in all simply preached this old-fashioned gospel. I have just kept to that one theme; content to know nothing else amongst men; and where are they that preached new gospels? They have been like the mist upon the mountain’s brow. They came, and they have gone. And so it will always be with those who preach anything but the

Word of God; for nothing will abide but the mount itself, the everlasting truth of the gospel to which the Holy Ghost bears witness. That same Holy Ghost is able to give you a new heart “even now”, to make you a new creature in Christ Jesus at this moment. Believest thou this?

Once more. I know that “even now” Christ can save you, and I pray you to believe it, for *the Father is still waiting to receive returning prodigals*. Still, as of old, the door is open, and the best robe hangs in the hall, ready to be put upon the shoulders of the son who comes back from the far country, even though he returns reeking with the odour of the swine-trough. How longingly the Father looks along the road, to see whether at length some of you are turning homeward! Ah! did you but know the joy that awaits those who come, and the feast which would load the welcoming table, you would “even now” say, “I will arise and go to my Father.” You should have returned long ago; but blessed be his love, which “even now” waits to clasp you to his heart!

Last of all, *faith is but the work of a moment*. Believe and live. Thou hast nothing to do; thou needest no preparations: come as thou art, without a single plea, but that he bids thee to come. Come now, “even now.” If Christ were far away, the time that is left to some of you might be too short to reach him; if there were many things which first of all you had to do, your life might close before they were half done; if faith had to grow strong before it received salvation, you might be in the place of eternal despair before your faith had time to be more than a mere mustard seed. But Christ is not far away; he is in our midst, he is by your side. You have nothing to do before you trust him, he has done it all; and, however weak your faith, if it but comes in contact with Christ, it will convey you to instant blessing. “Even now” you may be saved for ever; for —

“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full, through his blood.”

Surely all these are sufficient reasons why “even now” is a time of hope to you; may it also be a time of blessing! It shall be so if thou wilt but at this instant cast thyself on Christ. He says to thee that, if thou wilt but

believe, thou shalt see the glory of God. Martha saw that glory. Thou shalt see it too if thou hast like precious faith.

I long that God would give me some souls to-night, on this first occasion when I have met an evening congregation since my return from the sunny South. I desire earnestly that he would set the bells of heaven ringing because sinners have returned, and heirs of glory have been born into the family of grace. I stirred you up to pray this morning. Pray mightily that this word to-night, simple but pointed, may be blessed to many.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — John 11.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 95 (Part II.), 607, 612.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

PRAISE FOR THE GIFT OF GIFTS

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 13th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-day Evening, July 27th, 1890.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

— 2 Corinthians 9:15

In the chapter from which my text is taken, Paul is stirring up the Christians at Corinth to be ready with liberal gifts for the poor saints at Jerusalem. He finishes by reminding them of a greater gift that any they could bring, and by this one short word of praise, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," he sets all their hearts a-singing. Let men give as liberally as they may, you can always proclaim the value of their gift; you can cast it up, and reckon its worth; but God's gift is unspeakable, unreckonable. You cannot fully estimate the value of what God gives. The gospel is a gospel of giving and forgiving. We may sum it up in those two words; and hence, when the true spirit of it works upon the Christian, he forgives freely, and he also gives freely. The large heart of God breeds large hearts in men, and they who live upon his bounty are led by his Spirit to imitate that bounty, according to their power.

However, I am not going, on the present occasion, to say anything upon the subject of liberality. I must get straight away to the text, hoping that we may really drink in the spirit of it, and out of full hearts use the

apostle's language with intenser meaning than ever as we repeat his words: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." I shall commence by saying that *salvation is altogether the gift of God*, and as such is to be received by us freely. Then I shall try to show that *this gift is unspeakable*; and, in the third place, that *for this gift thanks should be rendered to God*. Though it is unspeakable, yet we should speak our praise of it. In this way you will see, as of old preachers used to say, the text naturally falls apart.

I. We begin with the thought that SALVATION IS ALTOGETHER THE GIFT OF GOD. Paul said, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Over and over and over again, have we to proclaim that salvation is wholly of grace: not of works nor of wages, but it is the gift of God's great bounty to undeserving men. Often as we have preached this truth, we shall have to keep on doing so as long as there are men in the world who are self-righteous, and as long as there are minds in the world so slow to grasp the meaning of the word "grace", that is, "free favour", and as long as there are memories that find it difficult to retain the idea of salvation being God's free gift.

Let us say simply and plainly, that salvation must come to us as a gift from God, for salvation comes to us by the Lord Jesus, and *what else could Jesus be?* The essence of salvation is the gift of God's Only-begotten Son to die for us, that we might live through him. I think you will agree with me that it is inconceivable that men should ever have merited that God should give his Only-begotten Son to the,. To give Christ to us, in any sense, must have been an act of divine charity; but to give him up to die on yonder cruel and bloody tree, to yield him up as a sacrifice for sin, must be a free favour, passing the limits of thought. It is not supposable that any man could deserve such love. It is plain that if man's sins needed a sacrifice, he did not deserve that a sacrifice should be found for him. The fact that his need proves his demerit and his guiltiness. He deserves to die; he may be rescued by Another dying for him; but he certainly cannot claim that the eternal God should take from his bosom his Only-begotten and Well-beloved Son, and put him to death. The more you look that thought in the face, the more you will reject the idea that, by any possible sorrow, or by any possible labour, or by any possible promise, a man could put himself into the position of deserving to have Christ to die

for him. If Christ is to come to save sinners, it must be as a gift, a free gift of God. The argument, to my mind, is conclusive.

Besides that, over and over again, in God's Word, *we are told that salvation is not of works*. Although there are many who cling to the notion of man's works as a ground of salvation, yet as long as this Book stands, and there are eyes to read it; it will bear witness against the idea of human merit, and it will speak out plainly for the doctrine that men are saved by faith, and not by works. Not once only, but often it is written, "The just shall live by faith;" moreover, we are told, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." The very choice of the way of salvation by believing, rather than by works, is made by God on purpose that he might show that grace is a gift. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Faith is that virtue, that grace, which is chosen to bring us salvation, because it never takes any of the glory to itself. Faith is simply the hand that takes. When the beggar receives alms, he does not bless the hand that takes, but blesses the hand that gives; therefore we do not praise the faith that receiveth, but the God who giveth the unspeakable gift. Faith is the eye that sees. When we see an object, we delight in the object, rather than in the eye that sees it; therefore do we glory, not in our faith, but in the salvation which God bestows. Faith is appointed as the porter to open the gate of salvation, because that gate turns upon the hinges of free grace.

In the next place, be it always remembered, that we cannot be saved by the merit of our own works, because *holy works are themselves a gift*, the work of the grace of God. If thou hast faith, and joy, and hope, who gave them to thee? These did not spring up spontaneously in thy heart. They were sown there by the hand of love. If thou hast lived a godly life for years, if thou hast been a diligent servant of the church and of thy God, in whose strength hast thou done it? Is there not One who works all our works in us? Could you work out your salvation with fear and trembling if God did not first work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure? How can that, then, claim a reward, which is, in itself, the gift of God? I think the ground is cut right away from those who would put confidence in human merit, when we show, first of all, that, in Scripture, salvation is clearly said to be "not of works, lest any man should boast"; and,

secondly, that even the good works of believers are the fruit of a renewed life; for “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

“All that I *was*, my sin, my guilt,
My death, was all mine own;
All that I *am*, I own to thee,
My gracious God, alone.”

Further, if salvation were not a free gift, *how else could a sinner get it?* I will pass over some of you, who fancy that you are the best people in the world. It is sheer fancy, mark you, without any truth in it. But I will say nothing about you. There are, however, some of us, who know that we were not the best people in the world; we who sinned against God, and knew it, and who were broken into pieces under a sense of our guilt. I know, for one, that there would have been no hope of heaven for me, if salvation had not been a free gift of God to those who deserved it not. After ministering among you for nearly thirty-seven years, I stand exactly where I stood when first I came to Christ, a poor sinner and nothing at all, but taking Christ as the free gift of God to me, as I took him at first, when, yet but a lad, I fled to him for salvation. Ask any of the people of God who have been abundant in service, and constant in prayer, whether they deserve aught at the hand of God, and those who have most to be thankful for will tell you that they have nothing that they have not received. Ask these, whom God has honoured to the conversion of many, whether they lay any claim to the grace of God, whether they have any merit, and whether in their hand they dare bring a price, and seek to buy of God his love; they will loathe the very thought. There is no way to heaven for you and me, my friends convinced of sin, unless all the way we are led by grace, and unless salvation is the gift of God.

But, once more: *look at the privileges which come to us through salvation!* I cannot, as I value those privileges, conceive for a minute that they are purchasable, or that they come to us as the result of our desert. They must be a gift; they are so many and so glorious as to be altogether outside the limit of our furthest search, and beyond the height of our utmost reach. We cannot by our efforts compass any salvation of any sort; but if we could, it certainly would not be such a salvation as this. Let us look, then, at our privileges.

Here comes, first, “the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” He that believes in Christ has no sin. His sin is blotted out. It has ceased to be. Christ has finished it, and he is unto God as though he had never sinned. Can any sinner deserve that?

“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And oh, my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here’s pardon too!”

Can any sinner bring a price that will purchase such a boon as that? No; such mercy must be a gift.

Next, everyone that believes in Christ is justified, and looked upon by God as being perfectly righteous. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is “accepted in the Beloved.” By this he becomes not only innocent, that is pardoned, but he becomes praiseworthy before God. This is justification. Can any guilty man deserve that? Why, he is covered with sin, defiled from head to foot! Can he deserve to be arrayed in the sumptuous robe of the divine righteousness of Christ, and “be made the righteousness of God in him”? It is inconceivable. Such a blessing must be the gift of infinite bounty, or it can never come to man.

Furthermore, beloved, remember that “now we are the sons of God.” Can you realise that truth? As others are not, believers are, the sons of God. He is their Father, and the spirit of adoption breathes within their heart. They are the children of his family, and come to him as children come to a father, with loving confidence. Think of being made a son of God, a son of him that made the heavens, a son of him who is God over all, blessed for ever. Can any man deserve that? Certainly not; this must also come as a gift.

Sonship leads on to heirship. “If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” My brother, if thou art a believer, all things are thine, this world, and the worlds to come. Could you ever deserve all that? Could such an inheritance have come to you through any merits of your own? No, it must be a gift. Look at it, and the blaze of its splendour will strike all idea of merit blind.

Further than that, we are now made one with Christ. Oh, tell everywhere this wonder which God hath wrought for his people! It is not to be

understood; it is an abyss too deep for a finite mind to sound. Every believer is truly united to Christ: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." Every believer is married to Christ, and none of them shall ever be separated from him. Seeing, then, that there is such a union between us and Christ, can you suppose that any man can have any claim to such a position apart from the grace of God? By what merit, even of a perfect man, could we deserve to become one with Christ in an endless unity? Such a surpassing privilege is out of the line of purchase. It is, and can only be, the gift of God. Oneness with Christ cannot come to us in any other way.

Listen yet again. In consequence of our union with Christ, God the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer. Our bodies are his temple. God dwelleth in us, and we dwell in God. Can we deserve that? Even a perfect keeping of the law would not have brought to men the abiding of the Holy Ghost in them. It is a blessing that rises higher than the law could ever reach, even if it had been kept.

Let me say, furthermore, that if you possess a blessed peace, as I trust you do, if you can say —

"My heart is resting, O my God;
I will give thanks and sing;
My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing;"

that divine peace must surely be the gift of God. If there is a great calm within your soul, an entire satisfaction with Christ your Lord, you never deserved that precious boon. It is the work of his Holy Spirit, and must be his free gift.

And when you come to die, as you may — unless the Lord comes, as he will — the grace that will enable you fearlessly to face the last enemy will not be yours by any right of your own. If you fall asleep, as I have seen many a Christian pass away, with songs of triumph, with the light of heaven shining on your brow, almost in glory while yet you are in your bed, why, you cannot deserve that! Such a death-bed must be the free gift of God's almighty grace. It cannot be earned by any merit; indeed, it is just then that every thought of merit melts away, and the soul hides itself in Christ, and triumphs there.

If this does not convince you, look once more. Let a window be opened in heaven. See the long line of white-robed saints. Hark to their hallelujahs. Behold their endless, measureless delight. Did they deserve to come there? Did they come to their thrones and to their palms of victory by their own merits? Their answer is, “We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;” and from them all comes the harmonious anthem, “Non nobis, Domine,” — “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth’s sake.” From first to last, then, we see that salvation is all the gift of God. And what can be freer than a gift, or more glorious than the gift of God? No prize can approach it in excellence, no merit can be mentioned in the same hour. O my brethren, we are debtors indeed to the mercy of God! We have received much, and there is more to follow; but it is all of grace from first to last. We know but little yet at what a cost these gifts were purchased for us; but we shall know it better by-and-by, as McCheyne so sweetly sings: —

“When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glaring sun;
When I stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o’er life’s finished story,

Then, Lord, shall I fully know —
Not till then, how much I owe.
When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own;

When I see thee as thou art,
Love thee with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.”

II. Now I would try to lead your thoughts in another direction as we consider that THIS GIFT IS UNSPEAKABLE. Do not think it means that we cannot speak about this gift. Ah, how many times have I, for one, spoken upon this gift during the last forty years! I have spoken of little else. I heard of one who said, “I suppose Spurgeon is preaching that old story over again.” Yes, that is what he is doing; and if he lives another twenty years, and you come here, it will be “the old, old story” still, for

there is nothing like it. It is inexhaustible; it is like an Artesian well that springeth up for ever and ever. We can speak about it; yet it is unspeakable. What mean we, then, by saying it is unspeakable? Well, as I have said already, Christ Jesus our Lord is the sum and substance of salvation, and of God's gift. O God, this gift of thine is unspeakable, and it includes all other gifts beside!

“Thou didst not spare thine only Son,
But gav'st him for a world undone,
And freely with that Blessed One —
Thou givest all.”

Consider, first, that Christ is unspeakable *in his person*. He is perfect man, and glorious God. No tongue of seraph, or of cherub, can ever describe the full nature of him whose name is “Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.” This is he whom the Father gave “for us men, and for our sakes.” He was the Creator of all things, for “without him was not anything made that was made,” yet he was “made of flesh and dwelt among us.” He filleth all things by his omnipresence; yet he came and tabernacled on the earth. This is that Jesus, who was born of Mary, yet who lived before all worlds. He was that Word, who “was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God.” He is unspeakable. It is not possible to put into human language the divine mystery of his sacred being, truly man and yet truly God. But how great the wonder of it! Soul, God gave God for thee! Dost thou hear it? To redeem thee, O believing man, God gave himself to be thy Saviour; surely, that is an unspeakable gift.

Christ is unspeakable, next, *in his condescension*. Can any one measure or describe how far Christ stooped, when, from the throne of splendour, he came to a manger to be swaddled and lie where the horned oxen fed. Oh, what a stoop of condescension was that! The Infinite becomes an infant. The Eternal is dandled on a woman's knee. He is there in the carpenter's shop, obedient to his parents; there in the temple sitting among the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions; there in poverty, crying, “The Son of man hath not where to lay his head;” and there, in thirst, asking of a guilty woman a drink of water. It is unspeakable. That he, before whom all the hosts of heaven veiled their faces, should come here among men, and among the poorest of the poor — that he who dwelt

amidst the glory and the bliss of the land of light, should deign to be a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, passes human thought! Such a Saviour is a gift unspeakable.

But if unspeakable so far, what shall I say of the fashion of Christ *in his death*? Beloved, I cannot speak adequately of Gethsemane and the bloody sweat, nor of the Judas kiss, nor of the traitorous flight of the disciples. It is unspeakable. That binding, scourging, plucking of the beard, and spitting in the face! Man's tongue cannot utter the horror of it. I cannot tell you truly the weight of the false accusations, the slanders, and the blasphemies that were heaped on him; nor would I wish to picture the old soldier's cloak flung over his bleeding shoulders, and the crown of thorns, the buffeting, the mailed fists, and the shame and sorrow he endured, as he was thrust out to execution. Do you wish to follow him along the streets, where weeping women lifted up their hearts in tender sympathy for the Lord of love about to die? If you do, it must be in silence, for words but feebly tell how much he bore on the way to the cross.

“Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin.”

Oh, it was terrible that HE should be nailed to the gibbet, that HE should hang there to be ridiculed by all the mob of Jerusalem! The abjects flouted him, the meanest thought him meaner than themselves. Even dying thieves upbraided him. His eyes are choked, they become dim with blood. He must die. He says, “It is finished.” He bows his head. The glorious Victim has yielded up his life to put away his people's sin. This is God's gift to you, divine, unspeakable, O ye sons of men!

But it is not all. Christ is unspeakable *in his glory*. When we think of his resurrection, of his ascending to heaven, and of his glory at the right hand of God, words languish on our lips; but in everyone of these positions, he is the gift of God to us, and when he shall come with all the glory of the Father, he will still be to his people the *Theo-dora*. the gift of God, the great unspeakable benediction to the sons of men. I wish that the people of Christ had this aspect of the Lord's glory more continually on their hearts,

for though he seems to tarry, yet will he come again the second time, as he promised.

“With that blessed hope before us,
 Let no harp remain unstrung;
 Let the mighty Advent chorus
 Onward roll on every tongue.
 Maranatha,
 Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!”

To me, one of the most wonderful aspects of this gift is Christ *in his chosen*; all the Father gave him, all for whom he died, these he will glorify with himself, and they shall be with him where he is. Oh, what a sight will that be when we shall see the King in his beauty, and all his saints beautiful in his glory, shining like so many stars around him who is the Sun of them all! Then, indeed, shall we see what an unspeakable gift did God gave to men, when through that gift, he makes his saints all glorious, even as he predestined them, “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the Firstborn among many brethren.”

But we do not need to wait until we see his face to know his glory. Brethren, Christ is unspeakable as the gift of God *in the heart here*. “Oh,” say you, “I trust I have felt the love of God shed abroad in my heart!” I rejoice with you, but could you speak it? Often, when I have tried to preach the love to Christ, I have not been able to preach it rightly, because I did not feel it as I ought; but oftener still, I have not been able to tell it out because I have felt it so much. I would fain preach in that manner always, and feel Christ’s love so much that I could speak it but little. Oh, child of God, if you have known much of Christ, you have often had to weep out your joys instead of speaking them, to lay your finger on your mouth, and be silent because you were overpowered by his glory. See how it was with John: “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” Why did you not preach, John? If he were here to-night, he would say, “I could not preach then, the splendour of the Lord made me dumb. I fell at his feet as dead.” This is one reason why the gift of God is unspeakable, because, the more you know about it, the less you can say about it. Christ overpowers us; he makes us tongue-tied with his wondrous revelations. When he reveals himself in full, we are like men that are blinded with excess of vision. Like Paul, on the Damascus road, we are forced to confess, “I could

not see for the glory of that light.” We cannot speak of it fully. All the apostles and prophets and saints of God have been trying to speak out the love of God as manifested in Christ; but yet they have all failed. I say, with great reverence, that the Holy Ghost himself seems to have laboured for expression, and, as he had to use human pens and mortal tongues, even he has never spoken to the full the measure and value of God’s unspeakable gift. It is unspeakable to men by God himself. God can give it; but he cannot make us fully understand it. We have need to be like God himself to comprehend the greatness of his gift when he gives us his Son.

Though we make constant effort, it is unspeakable, even *throughout a long life*. Do you ministers, who have been a long time in one place, ever say to yourselves, “We shall run dry for subjects by-and-by”? If you preach Christ, you will never run short. If you have preached ten thousand sermons about Christ, you have not yet left the shore; you are not out in the deep sea yet. Dive, my brother! With splendour of thought, plunge into this great mystery of free grace and dying love; and when you have dived the farthest, you will perceive that you are as far off the bottom as when you first touched the surface. It is an endless theme; it is unspeakable!

“Oh, could I speak the matchless worth,
 Oh, could I sound the glories forth
 Which in my Saviour shine!
 I’d soar and touch the heavenly strings,
 And vie with Gabriel while he sings
 In notes almost divine.”

But I can neither speak it nor sing it as I ought; yet would I finish Medley’s hymn, and say, —

“Well, the delightful day will come
 When my dear Lord will bring me home,
 And I shall see his face;
 Then with my Saviour, Brother, Friend,
 A blest eternity I’ll spend,
 Triumphant in his grace.”

But, even then, Christ will be still *in heaven for ever* a gift unspeakable. Perhaps we shall have another talk together, friends, on this subject when

we get there. One good woman said to me, “We shall have more time in eternity than we have now;” to which I replied, “I do not know whether there is any time in eternity, the words look like a contradiction.” “Oh, but,” said she, “I shall get a talk with you, anyhow; I have never had one yet.” Well, I dare say we shall commune up there of these blessed things, when we shall know more about them. As we are to be there for ever and ever, we shall need some great subjects with which to keep up the conversation: what vaster theme can we have than this? Addison, in one of her verses, says —

“But, oh! Eternity’s too short
To utter half thy praise.”

And I have heard simpletons say that the couplet was very faulty; “you cannot make eternity short,” they say. That shows the difference between a poet and a critic. A critic is a being all teeth, without any heart; and a poet is one who has much heart, and who sometimes finds that human language is not sufficient to express his thoughts. We shall never have done with Christ in heaven. Oh, my Lord, thy presence will make my heaven!

“Millions of years my wondering eyes,
Shall o’er thy beauties rove;
And endless ages I’ll adore
The glories of thy love.”

This wondrous gift of God is an utterly inexhaustible, unspeakable subject.

III. Now, lastly, I come to this point, that FOR THIS GIFT THANKS SHOULD BE RENDERED. The text says, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” By this the apostle not only meant that he gave thanks for Christ; but he thus calls upon the church, and upon every individual believer, to join him in his praise. Here do I adopt his language, and praise God on my own behalf, calling upon all of you who know the preciousness of Christ, the gift of God, to unite with me in thanksgiving. Let us as with one heart say it now, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

Some cannot say this, for they never think of the gift of God. You who never think of God, how can you thank God? There must be “think” at the bottom of “thank.” Whenever we think, we ought to thank. But some

never think, and therefore never thank. Beloved friend, what are you at? That Christ should die; is it nothing to you? That God “gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;” is that nothing to you? Let the question drop into your heart. Press it home upon yourself. Will you say that you have no share in this gift? Will you deliberately give up any hope you may have of ever partaking of the grace of God? Are you determined now to say, “I do not care about Christ”? Well, you would hardly like to say that; but why do you practically declare this to be your intention, if you do not want to say it? Oh, that you might now so think of Christ as to trust him at once, and begin to raise this note of praise!

Some, on the other hand, do not thank God because they are always delaying. Have I not hearers here to-night who were here ten years ago, and were rather more hopeful then than they are now? “There is plenty of time,” say you; but you do not say this about other matters. I admired the children, the other day, when the teacher said, “Dear children, the weather is unsettled. You can go out next Wednesday; but do you not think it would be better to stop a month, so that we could go when the weather is more settled?” There was not a child that voted for stopping a month. All the hands we up for going next Wednesday. Now, imitate the children in that. Do not make it seem as if you were in a no hurry to be happy; for as he that believeth in Christ hath eternal life, to postpone having it is an unworthy as well as unwise thing to do. No, you will have it, I hope, at once. There is a man here who is going to be a very rich man when his old aunt dies. You do not wish that she should die, I am sure; but you sometimes wonder why some people are spared to be ninety, do you not? You are very poor now, and you wish that some of this money cold come to you at once; you are not for putting that off. Why should you put off heavenly riches and eternal life? I beseech you to believe in Christ now; then you will be willed with thankfulness and joy.

Some cannot say, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,” for they do not know whether they have it or not. They sometimes think that they have; they oftener fear that they have not. Never tolerate a doubt on this subject, I implore you. Get full assurance. “Lay hold on eternal life.” Get a grip of it. Know Christ; trust Christ wholly: and you have God’s word for it, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath

everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Then you can say, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

Now, dear friends, let me ask you to join in this exercise. Let us first unitedly *thank God for this gift*. Put out of your mind the idea that you ought to thank Christ, but not thank the Father. It was the Father that gave Christ. Christ did not die to make his Father love us, as some say that we preach. We have always preached the very opposite, and we have quoted that verse of Kent —

“‘Twas not to make Jehovah’s love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from his throne above,
A suffering man became.

“‘Twas not the death which he endured,
Nor all the pangs he bore,
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was love before.”

He gave his Son because he already loved us. Christ is the exhibition of the Father’s love, and the revelation of Christ is made because of “the love of the Spirit.” Therefore, “Thanks be unto God” — the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost — “for his unspeakable gift.”

While you saved ones, every one, raise your note of gratitude, be very careful to *thank God only*. Do not be thinking by whose means you were converted, and begin to thank the servant instead of the Lord whom he serves. Let the man who was used as the instrument in God’s hand be told, for his comfort, of the blessing God sent you through him; but thank God, and thank only God, that you were led to lay hold of Christ, who is his unspeakable gift.

Moreover, *thank God spontaneously*. Look at the apostle, and imitate him. When he sounded this peal of praise, his mind was occupied at the time about the collection for the poor saints; but, collection or no collection, he will thank God for his unspeakable gift. I like to see thanks to God come up at what might be an untimely moment, When a man does not feel just as happy as he might be, and yet says, “Thank God,” it sounds

refreshingly real. I like to hear such a bubbling up of praise as in the case of old father Taylor, of New York, when he broke down in the middle of a sentence. Looking up at the people, he said, "There now! The nominative has lost its verb; but, hallelujah! I am on the way to glory;" and so he went on again. Sometime we ought to do just like that. Take an opportunity, when there comes a little interval, just to say, "Whether this is in tune or not, I cannot help it: thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Lastly, as you receive the precious gift, *thank God practically*. Thank God by doing something to prove your thanks. It is a poor gratitude which only effervesces in words, and skirts deeds of kindness. Real thankfulness will not be in word only, but in deed too, and so it will prove that it is in the truth.

"Well, what could I do that would please God?" you say. First, I should think you could look for his lost children. That is a sure way to please him. Go to-night, and see whether you cannot find one of the erring whom you might bring back to the fold. Would you not please a mother, if she had lost her baby, and you set to work to find it? We want to please God. Seek the lost ones, and bring them in.

If you want to please God, next, succour his poor saints. If you know anything of them, help them. Do something for them for Christ's sake. I knew a woman who used always to relieve anybody that came to her door in the dress of a sailor. I do not think that half those who came to her ever had been to sea at all; but, still, if they came to the door as sailors, she used to say, "Ah! my dear boy was a sailor. I have not seen him for years. He is lost somewhere at sea; but for dear Jack's sake, I always help every sailor that comes to my door." It is a right feeling, is it not? I remember, when I first came to London from my country charge, I used to think of that, if I came across a dog or a cat that came from Waterbeach, I would like to feed it. So, for the love of Christ, love Christ's poor people. Whenever you find them, say, "My Lord was poor, and so are you, and for his dear sake I will help you."

If you want to please God, next, bear with the evil ones. Do not lose your temper; I mean, by that, do not get angry with the unthankful and the evil. Let your anger be lost in praise for the gift unspeakable. Please God by bearing with evil men, as he bears with you. But if you have a very bad

temper, I hope that, in another sense, you may lose it, and never find it any more.

And lastly, if you want to please God, watch, like the Thessalonians, “for his Son from heaven.” The Lord Jesus is coming again, in like manner as he departed, and there is no attitude with which God is more delighted in his saved people than with that of watching for the time when “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.”

Beloved, may God help you thus to magnify his Son; and to him shall be all the praise! Let us again lift up our glad hallelujah: “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON

— 2 Corinthians 9.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 534, 236, 428.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

SAD FASTS CHANGED TO GLAD FEASTS

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, March 20th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-day Evening, September 7th, 1890.

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.”

— Zechariah 8:19

My time for discourse upon this subject will be limited, as we shall gather around the communion-table immediately afterwards. So in the former part of my sermon I shall give you an outline of what might be said upon the text if we had time to examine it fully. It will be just a crayon sketch without much light and shade. You will be able to think over the subject at your leisure, and fill up the picture for yourselves!

We have, in the chapters we have read, a blessed message of peace to God's people in the day of their trouble. In the land of their captivity the Jews were in great perplexity. Their sad lament is on record; “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.” But their trouble led many of them to seek the Lord and he was found of them.

Welcome is such misery which leads to such mercy. In the seventh chapter we are told that, when they sent unto the house of God, to pray before the Lord, and to say, “Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? *Then* came the word of the Lord.”

Jehovah has put their tears into his bottle, and in answer to their sighing sent them a message of hope. That message has in it much that is very practical. It is a letter full of mercy, but it is directed to certain characters. God does not send indiscriminate mercy. If men go on in their sin, he sends them words of judgment; but when they turn from their wickedness, and are renewed by his grace in the spirit of their minds, then it is that words of comfort are spoken to them.

Reviewing the whole message which Zechariah was commissioned to deliver, and which is summed up in our text, there are three things which stand out in clear prominence. The first is, that *God calls for transformation of character* in the people he is going to bless. The second is, that *he promises translation of condition* to those whose characters are thus changed and beautiful. And, lastly, *he ordains transfiguration of ordinances* as the result of the new character and condition. The whole subject is exceedingly suggestive, and well worthy of careful study when you reach your homes.

We must not lose sight of the fact that, primarily, this message is for Israel according to the flesh, and contains a prophesy of their latter-day glory. God hath not cast off his people whom he did foreknow, and there are majestic words here which still await their fulfillment when the set time shall have come. The Lord “will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem”, and make the place of his feet glorious in that day. But as “no prophesy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,” so the message to the Jews also bears a message for us. Let us seek to learn its lessons well.

I. My text reminds me — and the chapter before us emphasizes the fact — that, when God means to bless his people, HE CALLS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER. The promise of the abiding presence of the Lord God Almighty is ever proceeded by the call to separation and holiness. “The words which the Lord had cried by the former prophets” made it very clear that only with the righteous nation would God dwell; and Zechariah delivers a similar message.

Very remarkable will be the transformation of character which God shall work. According to the text, *love of truth* is to be one of the main effects of the change. These people certainly did not set much value on the truth before; they were in love with every lie, with every false God, and with every false prophet. But God would have them taste of his covenant blessings, and be set free from every false way. It is the only truth that can set men free; yet many there are even to-day who delight to be in bondage to error. How is it with you? Do you love the truth, or can you put up with that which is not true, if it is only pleasant? Say, dear heart, are you anxious after truth — truth in your head, truth in your heart, truth on your tongue, truth in your life? If you are false, and love falsehood, you are taken with a sore disease; and unless you are healed of the plague, you can never enter heaven. You must be transformed and made true, and only the Spirit of truth can effect the mighty change.

Another sign must follow: *love of peace*. The text also says: “Therefore love peace.” In some men it is a plain proof of conversion when they desire peace. Some are naturally very hot-tempered, and soon boil over. These are the men of great force of character, or else of great shallowness: it is the small pot which is soon hot. Some are malicious; they can take enmity quietly, and keep it in the refrigerator of their cold hearts, even for years. Such love is not peace; they are at war with all who have in any degree disappointed or displeased them. When the grace of God takes away an angry, passionate, malicious disposition, it achieves a great wonder. But then grace itself is a great wonder; and unless this change is wrought in you who need it, you shall not see God, for you cannot enter heaven to go into a passion there. Depend upon it, unless you lose your bad temper, you will never be amongst the ranks of the glorified. It must be conquered and removed, if you are to join the happy hosts on high. “They are without fault before the throne of God;” and so must you be if you are to be numbered amongst that company.

Moreover, those whom God blesses have undergone a transformation as to their conduct with each other. *Righteous dealing* is another effect of the change. Notice the ninth verse of the seventh chapter: “Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment.” This is at all times a necessary admonition, but never more necessary than now, when so many never dream of justice and goodness: in business and in private life many

seem to have no care for righteousness. If the thing will pay, they will rob right and left; and they will only be honest because there is an old saw that saith, “Honesty is the best policy.” But he that is honest out of policy is the most dishonest man in the world. May God grant us grace to do what is right at all costs! Christian men, when the grace of God reigns in their souls, would rather be the poorest of the poor than get rich by a single act contrary to uprightness. O beloved members of this church, be upright in all your transactions, clear and straight in your dealings; for how shall you call yourselves the children of the righteous God if you make gain by unholy transactions?

Another point of transformation lies in the exercise of *compassion*. This comes out in that same ninth verse of the seventh chapter: “Shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother.” A great mark of a changed heart is when we become tender, pitiful, and kind. Some men have very little of the milk of human kindness about them. You may lay a case before them, and they will wonder why you should come to them; and when you see how little they do, you yourself wonder why you ever came to them. Many there are whose hearts are locked up in an iron safe, and we cannot find the key! They have hidden the key themselves; there is no getting at their hearts. One such said to a minister who preached a sermon, after which there was to be a collection, “You should preach to our hearts, and then you would get some money.” The minister replied, “Yes, I think that is very likely, for that is where you keep your money.” The answer was a very good one. That is just where a great many persons carry their treasure; but when the grace of God comes, and renews the miser’s heart, he begins to be generous, he has pity upon the poor, and compassion for the fallen: he loves to bless those who are round about him, and make them happy. It is a mark of wonderful transformation in the character of some men, when their heart begins to go a little outside their own ribs, and they can feel for the sorrows of other men.

Notice, next, in the tenth verse of that same seventh chapter, that another mark of God’s people is *consideration for others*: “Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor.” How can he be a child of the all-bountiful Father who would make men work for wages that scarcely keep body and soul together? How can he be a son of the God of love, who will defraud the poor woman whose fingers must go stitch,

stitch, stitch, half through the night, before she can even get enough to give her even relief from her hunger? God's children will have nothing to do with this kind of thing. Those who take delight in oppressing the poor, and who make their gain thereby, will be themselves pinched in eternal poverty; they are little likely to enter the golden gates of paradise. There is many a child of God who has lived here in the depths of poverty; and when he gets to heaven, away from all the struggle and bitterness, is he to see the man who was his oppressor here below, coming into glory to sit side by side with him? I trow not.

Once more, where there is a work of grace, it leads men to *brotherliness* of character. "And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart," saith the Lord in the tenth verse of this seventh chapter; and the same thing is repeated in the seventeenth verse of the eighth chapter. I should be sure that some women were converted if they left off imagining evil against others in their hearts. For there are some women — and there are some men, too, I am sorry to say — who cannot think of anybody without thinking evil of them. There are such dreadful persons about, and sometimes we come across them to our dismay. They paint the very saints of God black, and there is no getting away from their slander; nay, let a man live the life of Enoch, yet would some of these people report evil against him. Slander is no sign of a saint; it is the brand of one who is under the dominion of the devil. "For all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord." God save us from them all!

Thus I have given you a brief outline of the transformation of grace. They are great changes because God works them. When men come to him, and yield themselves up to his divine power, he takes away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh. He turns their nature to the very reverse of what it was before; then they follow after truth and peace, they love righteousness, and learn kindness, through his good Spirit.

II. The second point to which I would draw your attention, with reference to the methods of God with his people, is that HE PROMISES TRANSMUTATIONS OF CONDITION to those men in whom are found the transformation of character. I have already read the eighth chapter through to you; let us go through it again, and pick out just a note or two of the joy and gladness which are here written in full score.

First, *jealousy is a tunnel into communing love*. God represents himself, in the second verse, as being very jealous about his people; because he loved them so much, he was jealous for them with great fury. The people set up false gods in his own city, even in his own temple, and God was angry with them, and would not dwell with them; but when they repented, and he had cleansed them by his mercy, he says, “I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.” What a change! God waits not until, by long obedience, his people win him back. He does not say that he will return when they merit his presence. No, the word comes to us full of surprise and power, “I am returned.” Instantly on the repentance, God comes back. A jealous God fights against me. I fly to Christ. He is content. He comes and dwells with me, no longer full of fury, but full of tenderness and love. If any of you have had God fighting against you, in holy jealousy chasing out your sin, happy will you be if you yield yourselves to Christ at once; if you do so, God will come quickly, and make your hearts to be his abode. May many get that transformation at this good hour!

Next, *desolation is turned into population*. On account of sin, Jerusalem became desolate. “I scattered them with a whirlwind,” saith the Lord, “among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.” Zion sat like a widow, nobody came up to her solemn feasts; but God returned to her and he says, in the fourth verse, “There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.” So that when God comes to bless his people, where there was nobody, there seems to be everybody. When churches and congregations sin, God often minishes them, and brings them low; but when they return to their God, the old saints are seen there again, and there are new-born believers in plenty. God can soon change the estate of his people. It is the same with individual souls who have gone away from God, but afterwards repent and return to him. Then the desolation of heart is forgotten in the joy of the multitude of sweet and holy thoughts and interests, that crowd the heart and life. Old experiences revive, and new life and joy are born, where God comes near to us in grace and power. What a wonderful change this is! May we all taste its bliss!

Another change of condition follows: *scattering is turned into gathering*. God goes on to say that, as he scattered his people, so he will bring them together again from the east and from the west. This, as I have already said, has a first reference to the scattered Israel, but how true it also is of us! When the Lord leaves us, we are scattered like sheep without a shepherd in a cloudy and dark day; but when we turn to him, his word is sure. "I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." May we know, in our new experience, the truth of that promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee," and may it be to us according to his word!

The next change is, that *poverty is turned into plenty*. Whereas they become poor, and were half-starved with famine, God tells them that the city shall be prosperous: "The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew." God often changes men's circumstances when he changes their hearts. When he has been beating and bruising, if men will but yield to him, he turns to them in love and plenty. May the Lord do this with any of us who have grieved him, and brought his rod upon us! There is no truer word in the Book of God than this, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." With the covenant blessings of grace, God often bestows the common blessings of this life, even as it is written in the chapter before us, "I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things."

Farther on in the chapter we are told of another change: *ill-will is turned into good-will*. Before the Lord graciously visited them, no man loved his neighbor. So we read in the tenth verse. But when God's grace came, and changed their character, then one city went to another, and said, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also;" and they went up to the house of the Lord together. Oh, where the grace of God comes, it makes men friends! Enemies they may have been before, but then they go and seek one another out, and they say, "Come, old friend, let us end all this; give me your hand, and let bygones be bygones." There is nothing like love and unity among the people until the grace of God comes and conquers the natural ill-will which else would have had dominion. May such a transmutation take place between any here who

may be at variance, and may all bitterness and hatred, if such things exist, be put away!

Did you not notice also, in the reading of this chapter, how these people had been a curse, and how by the presence of God *the curse is turned into a blessing*? “And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.” When a believer dishonours God, one of the worst results of it is, that he becomes a snare to the people round about him. The very heathen look upon him as a curse. Inconsistent professors are the greatest stumbling blocks to the spread of the cause of Christ. But when their character is changed by the abounding grace of God, they become like overflowing springs, sending streams of blessing far and wide.

Moreover, in the day of blessing, their *reproach is turned into honour*. The nation had been despised; nobody would honour a Jew; but when they honoured God, then God would honour them, and ten men would take hold of the skirts of a man that was a Jew, saying, “We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.” A man of God would then become more precious than the gold of Ophir. Well, my friends, when we return to God, God very soon has ways of making us honourable, so that we are of value among men. He makes use of us, and men begin to perceive that we are not to be despised if God is with us, and his blessing rests upon us.

Thus have I hurried over these two points, because I want to dwell a little longer on the text itself; it was necessary, however, to introduce it in this way.

III. Now we come to this fact, which always accompanies God’s presence. HE ORDAINS TRANSFIGURATIONS OF ORDINANCES. Four fasts, which had been kept by the Jews, were to be turned into feasts, when the character of the men who observed them had changed, and God had dealt graciously with them. Before this, their feasts had been farces, occasions of self-glorification, and all manner of pride. Now, these days were to be festivals of gladness, and times of drawing near to God, rejoicing in his good gift. In like manner, when a man becomes a believer in Christ, and is

renewed, this principle operates; many a fast is turned into a feast, and many a sorrow and sadness into joy and gladness.

When the communion-table shall be uncovered, you will see before you, in the emblems of *the death of our Lord*, what might have been the memory of a fast. The Lord of life and glory was nailed to the accursed tree. He died by the act of guilty men. We, by our sins, crucified the Son of God. We might have expected that, in remembrance of his death, we should have been called to a long, sad, rigorous fast. Do not many men think so even to-day? See how they observe Good Friday, a sad, sad day to many; yet our Lord has never enjoined our keeping such a day, or bidden us to look back upon his death under such a melancholy aspect. Instead of that, having passed out from under the old covenant into the new, and resting in our risen Lord, who once was slain, we commemorate his death by a festival most joyous. It came over the passover, which was a feast of the Jews; but unlike that feast, which was kept by unleavened bread, this feast is brimful of joy and gladness. It is composed of bread and of wine, without a trace of bitter herbs, or anything that suggests sorrow and grief. The bread and the cup most fitly set forth the death of our Lord and Saviour, and the mode of that death, even by the shedding of his blood; but as they stand before us now, they evoke no tears, they suggest no sighs. The memorial of Christ's death is a festival, not a funeral; and we are to come to the table with gladsome hearts, ay, and go away from it with praises, for "after supper they sang a hymn." At both ends it was psalm-singing. The great Hallel of the Jews commenced it, and another psalm, full of joy and gladness out of the hallelujahs of the psalms finished it. Oh, what hath God wrought! We crucified the Christ of God; but in that crucifixion we have found our ransom. With wicked hands he was slain by us; but his blessed sacrifice hath put all our sin away for ever. Our hymn rightly asks —

“‘It is finished;’ shall we raise
Songs of sorrow, or of praise?
Mourn to see the Saviour die,
Or proclaim his victory?”

But it justly answers —

“Lamb of God! Thy death hath given
Pardon peace, and hope of heaven:
‘It is finish’d;’ let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!”

As the Lord’s Supper leads the way in that direction, I may say that every other fast of the Christian has been transfigured in the same manner. *The Sabbath* is to many people a very dreary day; but to many of us it is a fast which has been turned into a feast. I am often amused when I read the accounts that are given by some people of an English Sabbath-day. In all soberness it is set forth what we Puritans do on this first day of the week. We wake up in the morning, and say to ourselves, “Another dreadfully miserable day come around,” and then we go off to our places of worship, where we sit with frightfully long faces, and listen to terribly dismal sermons; we do not sing, or even smile; but we howl out some ugly psalm, and make ourselves as unhappy as ever we can be. When we come home, we draw down the blinds to keep the sun out. We never go into the garden to admire the flowers. Well, you know the rest of the story. I think we are descendants of the people who killed the cat on Monday because it cause mice on Sunday — at least, so I have heard. But if I had not read all this, I should not have known it. Often, when I see in the paper some description of myself, I say, “Well, people somehow seem to know me better than I know myself; I never thought anything of the kind; it has never entered my head. Yet here is it in black and white.” O beloved friends! Our idea of the Lord’s-day is altogether different from this hideous caricature of it. If I had to describe our Sabbaths, I should say that they are full of brightness, and joy, and delight. I should tell of our singing, with full hearts, of the happy prospect before us in that land —

“Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”

I am sure we should not be likely to go to that heavenly country if our Sabbaths here were as dreary as some say they are. Why, here in this house, we have had our merriest times! Of old, when the prodigal came back, “they began to be merry,” and I have never heard that they have left off; at any rate, I do not think that we have. We have rejoiced with the joy

of harvest as we have heard of sinners saved, and have known that we are saved ourselves. I grant you that, before we knew the Lord, it did sometimes seem to our young minds rather a dull thing to read the Bible, and hear sermons, and to keep the Sabbaths; but now that we have come to Christ, and he has saved us, now that we are his; the first day of the week, which was a fast, has become a feast, and we look with eager delight for the Sundays to come round one after another. In fact, these Lord's-days are the beds of flowers in our gardens. The week-days are only the gravel paths that yield us little but weariness as we walk along them. Happy Sabbath! We hail thy coming with delight, and sing —

“Welcome sweet day of rest,
That saw the Lord arise;
Welcome to this reviving breast,
And these rejoicing eyes!

“The King himself comes near,
And feasts his saints to-day;
He we may sit, and see him here,
And love, and praise, and pray.”

So, you see, this is a second instance in which what might have been a fast is turned into a feast.

There is another thing that is to some of us now a great feast, though formerly it was as full of weariness as a fast. It is *the hearing of the doctrine of grace*. I know some brethren who always sit very uneasily when I begin to preach the doctrines of grace. I am sorry that it is so, and I hope that they will grow wiser. Still, all of us did not always like to hear about God's electing love and absolute sovereignty; about the special redemption of Christ for his people; and about the union to Christ being an everlasting union, never to be broken. There was a time when we did not join very heartily in the lines —

“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from his love can sever.”

But, oh, when your heart gets into full fellowship with God, if it is with you as it is with me, you will be glad to get on that string! Is there anything that gives us greater joy than to know our calling and election,

and to make it sure; to know that the Father loved us as he loved Christ from before the foundation of the world, and that he loves us with such a love that can never end, and can never change, but will continue when the sun burns black as a coal? It was because they heard these grand doctrines that such crowds used to gather in the Desert in France to hear the old Calvinistic preachers. It was the hold these truths of grace had upon the minds and hearts of men that explains how it was that, under the gospel oaks in England, vast numbers used to come hear plain, and often illiterate men, preach the gospel. They preached a gospel that had something in it; and the people soon discover the real article when it is set before them. There is much that goes for gospel now, and if you could have a mile of it, you would not get an inch of consolation out of it, for there is nothing in it. But when your soul is heavy, and when your heart is sad, there is nothing like the old faith to put cheer and life into you. How often have I read *Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty* through and through when I have been ill! When the heart begins to sink, if one gets a grip of the sovereignty of God, and the way of his grace, whereby he saveth the unworthy, and getteth unto himself glory by his faithfulness to his promises, what had been a fast becomes to the child of God a feast of fat things, and royal cheer of a goodly sort.

You will all go with me in the next point. Sometimes *the day of affliction* becomes as a fast which has been turned into a feast. It is a trying thing to lose one's health, and to be near to death; to lose one's wealth, and to wonder how the children will be fed; to have heavy tidings of disaster come to you day after day in doleful succession. But if you can grasp the promise, and know that "All things work together for good to them that love God;" if you can see a covenant God in all, then the fast turns into a feast, and you say, "God is going to favour me again. He is only pruning the vine to make it bring forth better grapes. He is going to deal with me again after his own wise, loving, and fatherly way of discipline." You then hear the Lord saying to you —

"Then trust me, and fear not: thy life is secure;
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is my power;
In love I correct thee, thy soul to refine,
To make thee at length in my likeness to shine."

I have met with some saints who have been happier in their sickness and in their poverty than ever they were in health and in wealth. I remember how one, who had been long afflicted, and had got well, but had lost some of the brightness of the Lord's presence, which he had enjoyed during his sickness, said, "Take me back to my bed again. Let me be ill again, for I was well when I was ill. I am afraid that I am getting ill now that I am well." It is often worth while being afflicted in order to experience the great lovingkindness of God, which he bestows so abundantly on us in the hour of trouble and perplexity. Yes, God turns our fasts into feasts, and we are glad in the midst of our sorrow; we can praise and bless his name for all that he does.

Once more: the solemn truth of *the coming of the Lord* is a feast to us, though at first it was a fast. With very great delight we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly come. He is even now in the act of coming. The passage that we read, "Surely, I come quickly," would be better translated, "Surely, I am coming quickly." He is on the road, and will certainly appear, to the joy of his people, and for the emancipation of the world. There are certain writers who say they know when he is coming; do not you be plagued with them; they know no more about it than you do. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only;" said the Lord Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may come sooner than any of us expect; before this "diet of worship" shall break up, he may be here. On the other hand, he may not come for a thousand years, or twice ten thousand years. The times and the seasons are with him, and it is not for us to pry behind the curtain. Those of our number who are unsaved may well dread his coming, for he will come to destroy them that obey not the gospel. "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." That day will be terror, and not light to you. When he cometh, he shall judge the earth in righteousness, and woe unto his adversaries; for "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken into shivers." You have grave need to keep the fast of the Second Advent, for to you it is *dies irae*, day of wrath and day of vengeance, day of dread and day of woe. But if you become a believer, and by grace are transformed, as I described in the earlier part of this discourse, then it shall be a feast to you. Then you will look out for his appearing as the day of your hope, and will gladly say,

“Ay, let him come! Come Lord, nor let thy chariots wait! Come, Lord! Thy church entreats thee to tarry no longer! Come, thou absent love, thou dear unknown, thou fairest of ten thousand! Come to thy church, and make her glad!” To us the thought of the glorious Advent of Christ is no fast; it is a blessed feast. Our songs never rise higher than when we get on this strain. With what fervor we lift up our voices, and sing —

“Brothers, this Lord Jesus
Shall return again,
With his Father’s glory,
With his angel train;

For all wreaths of empire
Meet upon his brow,
And our hearts confess him
King of glory now”!

Last of all, to come still more closely home, *the approach of death* is to most men a dreadful fast. Not the Mohammedan Ramadan can be more full of piteous grief than some men when they are obliged to think of death. If some of you were put into a room to-morrow and were compelled to stay there all day, and to think of death, it would certainly be a very gloomy time to you. You *will* die, however, perhaps suddenly, perhaps by slow degrees. There will come a time when people will walk very gently round you bed, when they will wipe the death-sweat from your brow, when they will bow over you to see whether you still breathe, or whether you have gone. Out of the six thousand persons here to-night, there are some, certainly, who will never see New Year’s Day. Usually this is some one who does not see even another Sabbath-day. Almost every week we get an intimation that a hearer of the previous week has died before the next Lord’s-day.

Who among us will first be gone? Dare you think of it? O beloved, when once you have peace with God, and you know that you are going to behold his face, whom though you have not seen, yet you love, then you can think of death without trembling. I think that there is nothing more delightful to the man who has the full assurance of faith, than to be familiar with the grace, and with the resurrection morning, and with the white robe,

and with the harp of gold, and with the palm, and with the endless song.
The thought of death is more a feast to us than a fast; for as Watts sings —

“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”

“Well, I shall soon be home,” says one old saint; and she spoke of it as she used to speak, when a girl, of the holidays, and of her going away from school. “I shall soon behold the King in his beauty,” says another; he speaks of it as he might have spoken, when a young man, of his marriage-day. Children of God can not only read *Young’s Night Thoughts* without feeling any chill of solemnities there written out; but they can write in their diaries notes of expectation, at the thought of being with Christ, and almost notes of regret that they have not passed away to the glory, but are lingering here in the land of shadows. “What?” said one, who had been long lying senseless, when he came back again to consciousness, “And am I here still? I had half hoped to have been in my heavenly Father’s home and palace above, long before this; and I am still here.” Truly, beloved, the fast is turned into a feast, when we reach this experience. We will not hesitate to say, “Come, Lord, take us to thyself.” Oh for a sight of the King in his beauty!

“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of thine abode;
I’d leave thy earthly courts, and flee
Up to thy seat, my God.”

I knew right well a beloved brother in Christ with whom I was very familiar, who stood up one Sabbath morning, and announced just that verse. I thought of him when I repeated it, and I wondered whether it was quite as true to me as it was to him. He gave it out, and said —

“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of thine abode;
I’d leave thy earthly courts, and flee
Up to thy seat, my God!”

Then he stopped, there was a silence; and at last, one of the congregation ventured upstairs into the pulpit, and found that the preacher was gone. His prayer was heard. He was gone to the place of God” abode. Oh, happy they who die thus! The Lord grant that we may never pray against a sudden death! We may almost pray for it when once our soul is right with God. I can join John Newton, and instead of dreading the change, say

“Rather, my spirit would rejoice,
And long, and wish, to hear thy voice;
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of heaven, if thou art mine.”

But is Christ yours? Has the fast been changed into a feast for you, by faith in the crucified Saviour? God help you to answer that question with a glad, hearty “Yes”! Then may he make all your life “joy and gladness”, changing your fearful fasts into “cheerful feasts”, until at length all of us, who believe in Christ, and who love his appearing, shall sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON

— Zechariah 7 and 8.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 181, 30.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

OUR COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, April 10th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Thursday Evening, April 3rd, 1890.

“Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”

— Hebrews 5:2

The high priest looked Godward, and therefore he had need to be holy; for he had to deal with things pertaining to God. But at the same time he looked manward; it was for men that he was ordained, that, through him, they might deal with God; and therefore he had need to be tender. It was necessary that he should be one who could have sympathy with men; else, even if he could succeed Godward, he would fail to be a link between God and man, from want of tenderness and sympathy with those whom he sought to bring nigh to Jehovah.

Hence, the high priest was taken from among men that he might be their fellow, and have a fellow-feeling with them. No angel entered into the holy place; no angel wore the white garments; no angel put on the ephod and the breastplate with the precious stones. It was a man ordained of God, who for his brothers pleaded in the presence of the Skekinah. Many of us, I trust, have a desire within our hearts to come to God; but we need a High Priest. Inasmuch as it is his right, he counts it not robbery to be equal with

God; but he communes with the Father as one that was by him, as one brought up with him, who was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. But we ought also to be very grateful that we can come into touch with our High Priest on his human side, and rejoice that he is truly man. For thus saith the Lord, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty: I have exalted One chosen out of the people;" he is anointed, it is true, with the oil of gladness above his fellows, but still he and they are one, "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Those who came to the high priest of old, were not often of the rough sort. Those who wished to have fellowship with God through the high priest in the tabernacle, or in the temple, were generally the timid ones of the people. Remember how she who came when Eli was high priest was "a woman of sorrowful spirit"; and the high priest had to deal with many such. The sons and daughters of affliction were those who mostly sought the divine oracle, and desired to have communion with God; hence the high priest needed not only to be a man, but a man of tender and gentle spirit. It was necessary that he should be one with whom those with broken hearts, and those who were groaning under a sense of sin, would like to speak. They would dread an austere man, and would, probably, in many cases, have kept away from him altogether. Now, the mercy for us is, that our great High Priest is willing to receive the sinful and the suffering, the tried and the tempted; he delights in those that are as bruised reeds and smoking flax; for thus he is able to display the sacred qualifications. He "can have compassion." It is his nature to sympathize with the aching heart; but he cannot be compassionate to those who have no suffering, and no need. The heart of compassion seeks misery, looks for sorrow, and is drawn towards despondency; for there it can exercise its gracious mission to the full.

Often, when we are trying to do good to others, we get more good ourselves. When I was here one day this week, seeing friends who came to join the church there came among the rest a very diffident tender-hearted woman, who said many sweet things to me about her Lord, though she did not think that they were any good, I know. She was afraid that I should not have patience with her and her poor talk; but she said one thing which I specially remember: "I have to-day put four things together, from which I had derived a great deal of comfort," she told me. "And what are they, my sister?" I asked. "Well," she said, "they are those four classes —'the

unthankful and the evil, the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,’ Jesus ‘is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil’, and he ‘can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,’ and I think that I can get in through those four descriptions. Though I am great sinner, I believe that he will be kind to me, and have compassion upon me.” I stored that up; for I thought that one of these days I might want it myself; I tell it to you, for if you do not want it now, you may need it one of these days; you may yet have to think that you have been unthankful and evil, ignorant and out of the way, and it will give you comfort to remember that our Lord Jesus is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, and that he “can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.”

On this latter subject, I would speak at this time, wishing to comfort some who are of a sorrowful spirit, and others who may yet have need of such consolation as this topic gives.

Notice in our text, first, *the sort of sinners with whom our High Priest is concerned*, namely, “the ignorant and them that are out of the way”; secondly, *the sort of High Priest with whom sinners have to deal* — One “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way”; and thirdly, *the sort of infirmities in men that may be sanctified to great uses*. “For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity,” is said of an earthly high priest; this it was that made him fit to be a high priest; and there are certain infirmities that we might almost glory in, for they enable us to be like priests unto God, and make us helpful to his sorrowing and suffering children.

I. First, then, let us carefully observe THE SORT OF SINNERS FOR WHOM OUR HIGH PRIEST IS CONCERNED. While it is true that he is willing to receive all sorts of sinners, there are many who never come to him, nor submit to his authority. With those who proudly and rashly stand before God on their own merit, he has nothing to do; but with others of a different character he is greatly concerned.

The people who claim Christ’s aim are generally *those who have a very low opinion of themselves*. Out of all the tribes of Israel, those that came to the high priest, to ask him to present their sacrifice to God for them, and to speak a word from God to them, were God-fearing people. No doubt

hypocrites, occasionally, did come, and some of a proud spirit who trusted in their own offerings; but I should think that, all the year round, the high priest saw some of the humblest and best people in all Israel. Men and women, in sore trouble, would come to him; and these chastened spirits would be choice spirits. Men and women who were conscious of sin, and longing for pardon, would come to the high priest; men and women who had not sinned after the similitude of a public transgression, who nevertheless felt evil darkening their conscience within, would draw near to him; men and women who had lost the light of God's countenance, and who came longing to have it back again, because they could not live without it, would approach the courts of God's house. All these would be welcome visitors at the high priest's door, and would receive his sympathy and compassion. Such are the people whom Christ our great High Priest now delights to bless. The proud and self-satisfied cannot know his love; but the poor and distressed may ever find in him comfort and joy, because of his nature, and by means of his intercession.

As with the high priest of Israel in the olden time, amongst those who come to our High Priest, *are many whose fear and distress arise from ignorance*. Oh, dear friends, if all the ignorant were to come, we should all come; for we are all ignorant; but there are some who fancy that it is otherwise with them. They imagine they know all things, and, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. They know not their need of the great High Priest. Their folly is proved by their light esteem of him. But among those who come to our great High Priest in heaven, there are none but those who are ignorant.

In the first place, there is *a universal ignorance*. Notwithstanding all that great men may say about what they evolve from their own consciousness, I think that the only thing that a man can evolve from his own consciousness is folly and sin; for there is nothing else there. If he goes on evolving, he will evolve greater folly and greater sin, that is all. But when the Lord deals with men, he makes them feel that they know very little. What do we know of sin? The larger proportion of our sins are probably unknown to us. We do them, and scarcely observe that we have committed them. And who knows the evil that lies in any one sin? We is he that can weigh his iniquities in scales, or his errors in balances? Upon that one dread subject of sin, we are all life babes; we have not begun to learn more

than the alphabet of that awful knowledge. Sinful we are, but it is part of the effect of sin that we do not know the extent of our sinfulness, and we should not know it at all, if it were not for the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Again, what do we know of ourselves? Does any man truly know himself? “The proper study of mankind is man,” says Pope. I am not sure of that; but I am certain that the proper study of mankind is Christ; for in him we not only can learn about man, but much more besides. But how little we know of ourselves, of our natural weakness, of our evil tendencies, of our proneness in this direction, or in that! “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

What do we know of God the unsearchable? Is he past finding out? Who can sufficiently tell of his nature, or of his wondrous attributes? Who can speak adequately of his greatness, or of his glory? Who can number up his years, or declare the whole of his lovingkindness? “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” On this great subject as well as on the other topics I have mentioned, there is a universal ignorance. As compared with the light of God, we are in the dim twilight. He that seeth best only seeth men as trees walking.

But, in addition to the ignorance that is universal, there is also a *comparative ignorance* on the part of some; and because of this, the compassion of Christ flows forth to them. Those who are ignorant in this way, are the kind of sinners whom he has come to help as a High Priest. He puts them in a class by themselves.

There are, first, the recent converts — young people whose years are few, and who probably think that they know more than they do; but who, if they are wise, will recognize that, even by reason of the fewness of their years, their senses have not been fully exercised to discern between good and evil. You must not ask them questions about the deep things of God. They have to be satisfied with those blessed parts of Scripture where a lamb may wade; they must not meddle with those parts where leviathan has to swim. Many truths are either above them or below them, much experience is too deep for them. In the presence of many of God’s ways, they are compelled to say, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” The Lord Jesus Christ can take little boys

and girls to his bosom; and he does so, while they are as yet ignorant of many things. He loves them; he teaches them; he has compassion on them; and he says of them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of God." Christ receives them in spite of their lack of knowledge, and therefore we must treat such very tenderly. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones;" for our great High Priest has compassion upon their ignorance, and he instructs them. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children," when they trust in him who sympathizes with them, and who cares for them.

Others there are who are ignorant because of their little opportunity of getting instruction. Are there not many who are so placed that they have little chance of ever learning to read? We are thankful that there will be few left of that sort by-and-by. But there are others who, if they could read, have scarcely sufficient time allowed them to read their Bibles, and who, when they have read them, are very like the Ethiopian eunuch, in that they do not comprehend what they have read. If the question were addressed to them, "Understandst thou what thou readest?" they could truly say, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" There are many, all over our land, who are situated in places where they cannot often hear the gospel, and when they do hear it, it is so mixed up and confused, that it is small wonder they cannot make head or tail of it. Constantly do we meet with persons of that kind, whose ignorance is excusable; for they have had no teaching. They have not had opportunities of reading and searching, as most of us have had; upon these our great High Priest has compassion, and often with their slight knowledge they show more of the fruits of the Spirit than some of us produce even with our more abundant light.

Further than that, there are many that are of a very feeble mind. You can only with difficulty get a thought into their brain, and if you try to get another idea on the top of it, the second one seems to knock the first one out. They never learn much, and they are so constructed that they never will. In our pilgrim band we have a number who are like Mr. Feeblemind; we may try all that we can with him, but we shall never make a hero of him. Others are like Mr. Ready-to-halt, with his crutches; he did dance once, you will remember, when Giant Despair's head was cut off; but still he had to go on his crutches even then, and he never gave them up till he

crossed the river; then he left them to anybody who wanted such things, and, I fear me, there are many who want them to-day. We have those in our company who never will be able to give a systematic statement of the doctrines of grace, though they are full of grace. They could never explain how they were saved; but they *are* saved. I daresay the snail could never explain how he got into the ark, but he did get in; and these feeble ones are in Christ, though they cannot fully explain how they came to that blessed position. Some of these good people are not very apt to receive knowledge: they are not “learnable”, if I may coin a word to express my meaning. We cannot make them learn. They are willing to be taught, they are teachable; but they are not “learnable.” Ah, well, our blessed High Priest can have compassion on the ignorant, and the feeble-minded!

Beside the universal ignorance of which we have spoken, and this comparative ignorance, there is a *sinful ignorance*. We have some who are ignorant, and no excuse is to be made for them; their ignorance is to be condemned; and if these words reach any who are thus guilty, I would beseech them to pray God to pardon their guilt, and cease to sin in this way any longer. I mean those who are ignorant for want of attention. They are so full of business, and have such a great many other things to think of, that they do not value the means of grace. They say that they cannot attend, but we know that where there is a will there is a way. Perhaps they go once on a Sunday and never more all the week. Now, if I had to eat one meal a week, and only one, I should want it to be a very good one; but I think that I should hardly be in a good condition for the next one the week following. It is a grand thing to get a little bit by the way, by coming on a Thursday night, or a morsel or two on a Monday, at the prayer-meeting. This stays the heart, and keeps the soul in good order.

Some will never be much above the ignorant, because they have not the ambition to learn. They do not set themselves to study the things of God. They do not sufficiently prize the revelation of God. I pray that they may be stirred up to do so. Though they have been guilty of neglectfulness and forgetfulness, they are not to be deprived of the sweetness of this text. Our Lord can have compassion on the ignorant, and on such as are out of the way. Here stands the great company to which his compassion goes out, and its name is written, “*The ignorant.*” I think that we had better all get into this class; indeed, I am sure that we had better join it, and thus

obtain our Lord's compassion. I have seen, at a railway-station, gentlemen with first-class tickets walking up and down the platform unable to find a first-class carriage, and if the train was going on they have jumped in the third-class, so as to get to the journey's end. If there is a man here who does not think that he ought to be put down quite among the ignorant, jump in, brother, because you will get to your journey's end in this compartment, and there is no carriage, just now, for any wise person. There is nothing provided in the train that starts from this text, except that which is provided for the ignorant. The Lord hath us personally to rejoice that he can have compassion on the ignorant!

Now comes another description of the sort of sinners for whom our High Priest is concerned. There are *many whose fears arise from being out of the way*. The Lord "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." I remember that, when I felt myself to be a very great sinner, and verily thought I was more of a inner than anybody else, these words were very, very much blessed to me. I read them, "and on them that are out of the way"; and I knew that I was an out-of-the-way sinner. I was then, and I am afraid that I am now, somewhat like a lot out of the catalogue, an odd person who must go by himself. Very well; our High Priest can have compassion on those that are odd, on those that are out-of-the-way, on those who do not seem to be in the common run of people, and do not go with the multitude, but who must be dealt with individually, and by themselves. He can have compassion upon such.

But now let us look at the more exact meaning of the text.

To be out of the way is, in the case of all men, *their natural state*. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." That is where we are all by nature, and our own way is out of *the way*. Therefore, Christ can have compassion upon all of us who come to him; for he has learnt to deal with those who are out of the way, and such, literally, are we all.

In addition to that, men have gone out of the way by *their own personal folly*. We had enough original sin; but we have added to that another kind of originality in evil.

“Like sheep we went astray,
 And broke the fold of God
 Each wandering in a different way;
 But all the downward road.”

But there are some who wander most foolishly. You wonder why they sin in the particular way that they do. There seems to be no reason for it, no motive for it, no special temptation in that direction, and yet, they will do it. They wander out of the way by themselves. Have you done so, dear friend? The Lord can have compassion on those that are out of the way.

Some are out of the way because of *their seduction from the way by others*. False teachers have taught them, and they have taken up with the error brought before them by a stronger mind than their own. In some cases persons of evil life have had a fascination over them. It is wonderful how, in the cases of young men and young women, they frequently seem to be not themselves, but the evil embodiment of another. They are ruled and governed by the will of somebody else, and not by their own. Thus they are led out of the way. They are like sheep that “have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.” Ah, poor friend, it is ill that you should have been the victim of another’s temptation! Do not blame your tempter; blame yourself; but, at the same time, remember that Christ has compassion upon those who have been led out of the way. As by the will of another you were beguiled from the true path, so by the love of Another shall you be won back again, even as it has been with many of us.

Many are out of the way because of *their backsliding after grace has come to them*. Our text comprehends backsliders who were once in the way. To such we may say, “Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?” Something has been an occasion of stumbling to such; and now, though sitting in the house of God, they know they are not what they once were, nor what they ought now to be, nor what they must be, nor what I hope they will be, even before I shall finish my discourse. “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.” Why will ye wander from the only source of good? “Take with you words and turn to the Lord.” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The Lord calls you in infinite tenderness; for he can have compassion upon backsliders, and

stop them from becoming apostates, bringing them back unto himself, according to his divine purpose.

Others are out of the way because of *their consciousness of special sin*. Is there here anyone conscious of some great sin in years gone by? Is there a crimson spot upon your hand, which you have tried to wash out, but cannot; some act of your life which you would fain undo, and remove? There it is, still there, always there. Does it fret you by night, and weary you by day, to think of the gross iniquity of yours? Ah, it has put you out of the way! Perhaps you did not grasp all the consequences of what you were doing when you did it. Be comforted by this gracious text. Hear your High Priest pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He pleads your ignorance. You "did it ignorantly in unbelief"; and while this does not excuse you, it puts you into the list of those who are both ignorant and out of the way. Come to this compassionate High Priest, and trust your case in his dear hands; they were pieced because of your sin. Trust your iniquity with him; his heart was opened and set abroad because of your transgression. Come, trust in him. He died because of your sin. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Thus I have very feebly set forth the sort of sinners for whom Christ is High Priest; those who are ignorant, and those who are out of the way. This message is for almost everybody here, except my friend over there who knows everything, and never did anything wrong. He does not want any Christ, and I will not bother him with one. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick," saith the Lord Jesus; and he further adds this word, which shuts out you who never did any harm, "I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." To be so very learned, and so very good in your own estimation is no recommendation to Christ, but the reverse. He comes to men who need compassion, and those he teaches to profit, and leads in the way everlasting.

II. Having seen the sort of sinners with whom our High Priest is concerned, let us in the second place, look at THE SORT OF HIGH PRIEST WITH WHOM SINNERS HAVE TO DEAL.

Now, if I go back to the high priest under the law, the type would be a fine fatherly man, whose very face invited confidence. I should think that all

the people were glad when the high priest was very tender and compassionate. Possibly that had occasionally a high priest who was very high and very mighty; one who was very glad when the day's service was over. If sinners wanted to see him, he was not visible; and when he did talk to them, he was not very gentle. Sometimes he may have said to them, "Now you are stupid, you talk nonsense;" and when any of them were very sad, he said, "You ought to know better than to indulge this foolish nervousness of yours." I think that they were not sorry when that high priest was taken from them. But the pattern high priest was a fatherly-looking man, with love in his eyes, a smile on his face, one who had often sorrowed himself, one to whom all the people could go naturally. There are such men still alive. They are like a harbour for ships. Sometime sit brings a very heavy burden upon them, but they are happy men to have such a burden to carry. I think that some of those high priests must have seen a great deal of sin, and a great deal of mercy and divine love. When the poor people went up to the temple, one would say, "I must go in and see the high priest. I have such a burden and he will be able to help me." Another would say, "No, I shall not go in; I do not need to take up his time myself. Did not you hear him speak? What, what he said was just the very thing that I wanted. God gave him the very word that my distress required, and so I can go in peace." But here and there one would say, "Ah! I must tell him. It does me good to unburden my heart." Now that is the kind of high priest that we should all have wished for had we been living in those days; but our Lord Jesus is something incomparably better than that.

He is One who can bear with ignorance, forgetfulness, and provocation. How do I know it? Because he bore so wonderfully with the ignorance of people when he was here. It was with a very tender accent that he said to one of his disciples, "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip?" He had told them many, many times the same thing over again, and yet he was not above repeating it, he had such compassion on them. Sometimes, he could not say what he would have liked to say, and yet he bore with the poor men who did not know the burden he had on his heart: he only said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." And when, after he had taught them, they still forgot, he did not chide them. I never find that he turned one of them away because of their stupidity; he did not even cast off Thomas for his

unbelief. He let them still linger about his person, despite their false notions and their forgetfulness. They must often have grieved him through their ignorance, and through getting out of the way, especially when they got into the way of each desiring to be the greatest. But notwithstanding all, our Lord was never like Moses. Of him it is written that the people of Israel “provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.”; but never an impatient word came from those lips into which grace was so abundantly poured. There was never such a meek, and gentle, and quiet spirit as our divine Lord and Master possessed. I need not dwell on that, for you all know what compassion he had upon the ignorant sons of men.

Again, he is One who can feel for grief, because he has felt the same. When I have explained compassion as implying meekness of disposition, I have not given you the full meaning of the expression. Not only has our Lord compassion on the ignorant by being gentle towards them, but he sympathizes with them by having a fellow-feeling with them. They got out of the way, and into the thorns; they wandered, and fell into a maze; they were lost in the dark mountains, but he was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” “In all their afflictions he was afflicted.” Because of that fellow-feeling he is always very tender and pitiful; and if he finds any of his children sorrowing, he has abundant compassion upon them.

Moreover, *He is One who lays himself out tenderly to help such as come to him.* He did so when he was here in body, and he is the same now; all his life was given in tenderness. You never find Christ throwing bread and meat to the hungry crowd as we throw bones to the dogs. He has made them sit down on the green grass, and then he blessed the food, and gave it to his disciples, and they distributed it in a quiet, orderly way. And the Lord Jesus Christ has a very loving way now of helping his people. So tenderly does he do it, that the doing of it is almost as great a wonder as the thing that is done. He abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence, and we may each one say, “Thy gentleness hath made me great.” Oh, he is a wonderful Saviour! There is none like him for sympathizing with us, and dealing tenderly with us.

Another thing I have to say of him that never can be said of anybody else is, that *he is One who never repelled a single person.* Not even the most ignorant, the most out of the way, was ever turned back from him. It was

always true: "This man receiveth sinners." And for ever this word is settled in heaven, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

I have not time to go into this matter fully, but all who have read the life of Christ know what a gentle and tender High Priest he was towards men.

"Now, though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.
Well he remembers Calvary
Nor let his saints forget."

His heart is on earth, though he has ascended into the heavens. If anyone here groans after him, he will hear that groan; and if the wish does not come to a vocal sound at all, but if your heart only aches after him, he will feel that ache of your heart, and know what it means; and if you do not know how to pray, the very desire to pray he will interpret. He can have compassion on the ignorant. And if you do not know what you want, but only know that it is something that you must have or die, he will give it to you; for he will interpret your wordless desires, and what you cannot read yourself, he will read for you. But, oh, you must have him; you must have him, you cannot get to God without him! I pray that you will feel such confidence in his tenderness that you may come and take him as your own High Priest; if you do, he will be yours at the moment of acceptance. He will never refuse the seeker. He will not hide himself from his own flesh. He will never be distant and strange to any penitent sinner. If thou desirest him, it is because he desirest thee; and if thou hast a spark of wish for him, he has a furnace of desire for thee. Come, and welcome. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. God bless these words! I pray that he may do so, to very many.

III. Now, I want to speak to those of you who are the people of God. I can imagine that some of you here are troubled, perhaps ill, and that you cannot get on as you would like in the world. You seem compassed with infirmities. I want to remind you that there may be a blessing even in your weakness; and that this may be the more clearly seen we will look, in the third place, at the SORT OF INFIRMITY WHICH MAY BE SANCTIFIED AND MADE USEFUL.

The high priest of old was compassed with infirmities, and this was part of his qualification. "Yes," says one, "but he was compassed with sinful

infirmities; but our Lord Jesus had no sin.” That is quite true, but please remember that this does not make Christ less tender, but more so. Anything that is sinful hardens; and inasmuch as he was without sin, he was without the hardening influence that sin would bring to bear upon a man. He was all the more tender when compassed with infirmities, because sin was excluded from the list. We will not, then, reckon sin in any form as an infirmity likely to be turned to a great use, even though the grace of God abounds over the sin; but, beloved friends, let me try and speak to some of you who wish to do good, and set forth some of the things which were sore to bear at the times, and yet have been rich in blessing since.

First think of *our struggles in finding mercy*. Years ago you had a hard time of it when you were seeking the Saviour. I had, and I have always been very glad of it ever since. It was a long while before I could perceive the eternal light, and cast myself on Christ. I thank God that it was so because I have had to deal with hundreds — I might say thousands — in a similar case; and if I had found Christ, as many dear friends do, very readily and very easily, I could not have guided them; but now I can sit down by the side of them and say, “What! Have you got into the dark? I have been in the dark, too. You are down in the lowest dungeon, are you? Well, I was in the lowest dungeon of all. I can show you the way to where the jug of water stands, and the bit of brown bread. I know the way, for I have been there.” If you have not had a certain experience, you cannot so well help others who have; but if you were compassed with infirmity in your first coming to Christ, you may use that in helping others to come to him.

Again, *our grievous temptations* may be infirmities which shall be largely used in our service. “What a blessing it would be to live without temptations!” says one. I do not believe it would be a blessing at all. I think that, being without temptation is more of a temptation than having a temptation. There is no devil that is equal to no devil, for when there seems to be none, we get so very quiet and so very easy, and think that everything is going on well, when it is not. Be glad if you have been tempted. Remember that temptation is one of the best books in the minister’s library. To be tried, to be afflicted, to be downcast, to be tested — all this helps you to deal with others. You cannot be unto others a helper unless you have been compassed with infirmities. Therefore accept

the temptations which trouble you so much, as a part of your salvation to make you useful to others.

Our sickness may turn out to be in the same category. Of course we would like to be always well. I think that health is the greatest blessing that God ever sends us, except sickness, which is far better. I would give anything to be perfectly healthy; but if I had to go over my time again, I could not get on without those sick beds and those bitter pains, and those weary, sleepless nights. Oh, the blessedness that comes to us through smarting, if we are ministers and helpers of others, and teachers of the people! I do not say that too much of it is to be despised, but the Lord knows how much is too much, and he will never afflict us beyond that which he will enable us to bear. But just a touch of sickness now and then may help you mightily. I have heard some brethren preach the gospel, but it had been as hard as a Brazil nut; little children could never get at the kernel. These brethren had never had any trouble or affliction; and if you have never had any, you may try to be very tender, but it will be like an elephant picking up a pin; you may try to be patient and sympathetic, but you will not be able to manage it. Glory in your infirmities, then, and in your sicknesses, for they shall be made useful in you for the comfort of God's sick people.

Our trials, too, may thus be sanctified. He that has had no troubles, and no trials, what mistakes he makes! He is like the French lady in the time of famine, who said that she had no patience with the poor people starving because of the price of bread. You can always buy a penny bun for a penny, she said; and therefore she thought there need not be any poverty at all. She was one of the rich ones of the earth. I do not suppose that she had ever had a penny bun in her life, or a penny either. Ah, dear friends! You must, if you are ready to help others, be yourself compassed with infirmity.

Our depressions may also tend to our fruitfulness. A heart bowed down with despair is a dreadful thing. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" But if you have never had such an experience, my dear brother, you will not be worth a pin as a preacher. You cannot help others who are depressed unless you have been down in the depths yourself. You cannot lift others out of despondency and depression, unless you yourself have sometimes need to be lifted out of such experiences. You must be compassed with

this infirmity, too, at times, in order to have compassion on those in a similar case.

Herein I think that every one of us should try to make use of all his weaknesses. *Our whole nature as feeble men* may be turned to the noblest use if it calls forth our compassion towards others. Thanks God that you are not a man of iron. We has the Iron Duke once, who did famous things, but in a different fight from ours. An iron preacher would need to have iron hearers; and then, I am afraid, that there would come a crash before long. No, no; we must have our weaknesses and infirmity consecrated to God, and laid at his feet. Let us go, in all our weakness and infirmity, and try to help others who are as ignorant and as out of the way as we once were; and, God blessing us, when we are weak, we shall be strong. When we are less than nothing, the all-sufficiency of God will be all the more manifested. Here I must stop, for our time has gone. May the Lord bless the word, both to the sinner and to the saint, for his name's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Hebrews
4:15-16; 5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 326, 367, 376.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, February 14th, 1892,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-day Evening, October 19th, 1890.

This sermon was preached on the Lord's-day evening after Mr. William Olney "fell on sleep." Long before the beloved preacher was "called home," it was selected for publication this week. Mrs. Spurgeon feels that her dear husband could not have delivered a more suitable discourse for "his own funeral sermon." She has, therefore, given it that title in the hope that many will be blessed by the message which "he, being dead, yet speaketh." Believing that many friends will wish to have this sermon for widespread circulation, the publishers will at once issue it, in book form, price one penny.

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."

— Acts 13:36

It is remarkable that David should say, in the sixteenth Psalm, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," and yet that Paul should say concerning him, when preaching at Antioch, that he "saw corruption." The key to this apparent contradiction is the fact that David did not speak of himself, but of his Lord. Peter, in his memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, quotes the

words of the psalmist, applies them to his risen Redeemer, and distinctly affirms that, in the Psalm, “David speaketh concerning him.”

It is worthy of notice that Peter and Paul both use the same argument about this statement of David. These two apostles did not always agree; but however much they might differ about other matters, they were of one mind about the resurrection of Christ. I hope that, whatever differences there may be among true preachers of the gospel, they will always be one in declaring the resurrection of our Lord. This corner-stone of the gospel must never be displaced or dishonoured. The good news we are commissioned to declare is the same that Paul received and delivered, “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” Chief among the Scriptures fulfilled by the resurrection of Christ stands this word, which David, inspired by the Holy Ghost, wrote so long before the event: “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” The resurrection of Christ is the top-stone of our faith. Because “he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption,” Paul was able to say this to his hearers, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that before are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

The argument of the apostle is this. David could not have meant himself when he said, “Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;” because David died, and his body was buried, and it did see corruption. He must therefore have referred to Christ, who is indeed God’s “Holy One.” Of him the prophetic word was true, for God did not suffer him “to see corruption.” He died, and was laid in the grave, but he rose again on the third day. In that climate there was, while Christ lay in the grave, plenty of time for his body to become corrupt. The spices with which they perfumed the precious body would not have sufficed to keep back corruption; they would have helped conceal the unpleasant odour which putrefaction brings, but they would not have stopped the process of decay. But Christ rose again, and no corruption had come to his body, for that body was a holy thing; it had no defect, nor taint of sin, as our bodies have. Begotten of the Holy Ghost, it was a pure thing; though born of the Virgin Mary, it was united to the Godhead, and not separated from it even

in death; it saw no corruption. There is the apostle's argument, then: David speaking not of himself, but of someone else, says that the Lord will not suffer him to see corruption; and this he spake by the Spirit of the very Christ whom we preach to you as the Author and Finisher of salvation. He is living and reigning to-day, King of kings and Lord of lords; he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and live for ever with his risen, reigning Redeemer.

While Paul was speaking in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, he incidentally used the words of our text: "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." That is to be my subject on this occasion; forgetting for the present the main argument, I would only look at this eddy in the current, and draw your attention to the expression which dropped from Paul's lips concerning David. Let us ask, first, *What is it to serve our own generation?* Secondly, *What parts of our generation can we serve?* And, lastly, with tender memories of many who have gone from us, let us ask, *What will happen to us when our service is done?* Even that which happened to David; we shall, like him, "fall on sleep."

I. First, then, WHAT IS IT TO SERVE OUR OWN GENERATION?

This is a question which ought to interest us all very deeply. We live in the midst of our own generation, and seeing that we are part of it, we should serve it, that the generation in which our children shall live may be better than our own. Though our citizenship is in heaven, yet as we live on earth, we should seek to serve our generation while we pass as pilgrims to the better country.

What, then, is it for a man to serve his own generation?

I note, first, that *it is not to be a slave to it*. It is not to drop into the habits, customs, and ideas of the generation in which we live. People talk nowadays about *Zeitgeist*, a German expression which need frighten nobody; and one of the papers says, "Spurgeon does not know whether there is such a thing." Well, whether he knows anything about *Zeitgeist* or not, he is not to serve this generation by yielding to any of its notions or ideas which are contrary to the Word of the Lord. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not only for one generation, it is for all generations. It is the faith which needed to be only "once for all delivered to the saints"; it was given

stereotyped as it always is to be. It cannot change because it has been given of God, and is therefore perfect; to change it would be to make it imperfect. It cannot change because it has been given to answer for ever the same purpose, namely, to save sinners from going down to the pit, and to fit them for going to heaven. That man serves his generation best who is not caught by every new current of opinion, but stands firmly by the truth of God, which is a solid, immovable rock. But to serve our own generation in the sense of being a slave to it, its vassal, and its varlet — let those who care to do so go into such bondage and slavery if they will. Do you know what such a course involves? If any young man here shall begin to preach the doctrine and the thought of the age, within the next ten years, perhaps within the next ten months, he will have to eat his own words, and begin his work all over again. When he has got into the new style, and is beginning to serve the present world, he will within a short time have to contradict himself again, for this age, like every other, is “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” But if you begin with God’s Word, and pray God the Holy Ghost to reveal it to you till you really know it, then, if you are spared to teach for the next fifty years, your testimony at the close will not contradict your testimony at the beginning. You will ripen in experience; you will expand in your apprehension of the truth; you will become more clear in your utterance; but it will be the same truth all along. Is it not a grand thing to build up, from the beginning of life to the end of it, the same gospel? But to set up opinions to knock them down again, as though they were ninepins, is a poor business for any servant of Christ. David did not, in that way serve his own generation; he was the master of his age, and not its slave. I would urge every Christian man to rise to his true dignity, and be a blessing to those amongst whom he lives, as David was. Christ “hath made us kings and priests unto God his Father”; it is not meet that we should cringe before the spirit of the age, or lick the dust whereon “advanced thinkers” have chosen to tread. Beloved, see to this; and learn the distinction between serving your own generation and being a slave to it.

In the next place, in seeking to answer the question, “What is it to serve our own generation? I would say, *it is not to fly from it*. If any man says, “The world is so bad, that I will avoid coming into contact with it altogether; even the teaching of Christianity has become so diluted, and is so thoroughly on the Down-grade, that I will have nothing to do with it,”

he is certainly not serving his own generation. If he shall shut himself up, like a hermit, in his cave, and leave the world to go to ruin as it may, he will not be like David, for he *served* his own generation before he fell asleep. She that goes into a nunnery, and he that enters a monastery are like soldiers who run away, and hide among the baggage. You must not do anything of the sort. Come forward and fight evil, and triumph over it, whether it be evil of doctrine, evil of practice, or evil of any other kind. Be bold for Christ; bear your witness, and be not ashamed. If you do not take your stand in this way, it can never truly be said of you that you served your generation. Instead of that, the truth will be that you allowed your generation to make a coward of you, or, to muzzle you like a dog, and to send you out, into the streets neither to bark nor to bite, nor to do anything by which you might prove that there is a soul within you.

If we ask again, What is it to serve our generation? I answer, *it is to perform the common duties of life*, as David did. David was the son of a farmer, a sheep-owner, and he took first of all to the keeping of the sheep. Many young men do not like to do the common work of their own father's business. You do not want to drudge, you say, you want to be a king. Well, there are not many openings in that line of business; and I shall not recommend anyone to be eager to enter them if there were. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Before David swayed the sceptre, he grasped the shepherd's crook. He that at home cannot or will not undertake ordinary duties, will not be likely to serve his age. The girl who dreams about the foreign missionary field, but cannot darn her brother's stockings, will not be of service either at home or abroad. Do the commonplace things, the ordinary things that come in your way, and you will begin to serve your generation, as David served his.

But serving our generation means more than this. *It is to be ready for the occasion when it comes*. In the midst of the routine of daily life, we should, by diligence in duty, prepare for whatever may be our future opportunity, waiting patiently until it comes. Look at David's occasion of becoming famous. He never sought it. He did not go up and down among his sheep, sighing and crying, "Oh, that I could get away from this dull business of looking after these flocks! My brothers have gone to the camp; they will get on as soldiers; but here am I, buried among these rocks, too looks after these poor beasts." He was wiser than that; he quietly waited God's time.

That is always a wise thing to do. If you are to serve God, wait till he calls you to do his work; he knows where to find you when he wants you; you need not advertise yourself to his omniscience. At length the set time came for David. On a certain day, his father bade him go to his brethren, and take them some corn and some loaves, with cheeses for their captain; and he reached the camp just at the time when the giant Goliath was stalking forth, and defying all the armies of Israel to meet him. Now is David's time, and the young man is ready for it. If he had lost the opportunity he might have remained a shepherd all the rest of his days. He tells Saul how he slew both the lion and the bear, and prophesies that the uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he had defied the armies of the living God. Disdaining Saul's armour, he takes his sling, and his five smooth stones out of the brook, and soon he comes back with the gory head of the giant in his hand. If you want to serve the church and serve the age, beloved friend, be wide awake when the occasion comes. Jump into the saddle when the horse is at your door; and God will bless you if you are on the look-out for opportunities of serving him.

What is it, again to serve our generation? *It is to maintain true religion.* This David did. He had grave faults in his later life, which we will not extenuate; but he never swerved from his allegiance to Jehovah the true God. No word or action of his ever sanctioned anything like idolatry, or turning aside from the worship of Jehovah, the God of Israel. He bore a noble witness to his Lord. He said, "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed;" and we may be sure that he was as good as his word, and that when he met with foreign potentates, he vindicated the living God before them. The whole set and current of his life, with the exception of his terrible fall, was to the glory of God in whom he trusted, and to the praise of that God who had delivered him. We, too, shall truly serve those amongst whom we dwell by maintaining true religion. Had ten righteous men been found in Sodom, it would have been spared, and the world to-day only escapes the righteous judgment of God because of the presence in it of those who fear him, and tremble at his word. The spread of "pure and undefiled religion" is a certain way to serve those around us. To help true religion, David wrote many Psalms, which were sung all over the land of Israel. A wonderful collection of poems they are; there is none like them under heaven. Not even a Milton, with all his mighty soarings, can equal David in the height of his adoration of God, and

the depth of his experience. That man does no mean service for his time who gives the people new songs which they can sing unto their God. While none can equal the inspired psalms of the Hebrew king, which must ever form the choicest praise-book of the church, other men may, in lesser degree serve their own generation, by the will of God, in a similar way, and be blessed in the deed.

To serve our own generation is not a single action, done at once, and over for ever; *it is to continue to serve all our life*. Notice well that David served "his own generation"; not only a part of it, but the whole of it. He began to serve God, and he kept on serving God. How many young men have I seen who were going to do wonders! Ah, me! They were as proud of the intention as though they had already done the deed. They took a front seat, and they seemed to think that everybody ought to admire them because of what they were going to do; but they were so pleased with the project that they never carried it out. They thought that they might meet with some mishap if they really attempted to do the thing, and the project was so beautiful that they preserved it under a glass shade, and there it is now. Nothing has been accomplished; nothing has been done, though much has been thought of. This is folly. Some, too, begin well, and they serve their God earnestly for a time, but on a sudden their service stops. One cannot quite tell how it happens, but we never hear of them afterwards. Men, as far as I know them, are wonderfully like horses. You get a horse, and you think, "This is a first-rate animal," and so it is. It goes well for a while, but on a sudden it drops lame, and you have to get another. So it is with church-members. I notice that, every now and then, they get a singular lameness. To very many we have to say, even as Paul said to the Galatians, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" But David continually served God to the end of his life. May we all, by divine grace, thus serve our whole generation, too!

Yet more is included in this faithful serving of our generation. *It is to prepare for those who are to come after us*. David served his generation to the very end by providing for the next generation. He was not permitted to build the temple; but he stored up a great mass of gold and silver to enable his son Solomon to carry out his noble design, and build a house for God. This is real service; to begin to serve God in early youth; to keep on till old age shall come; and even then to say, "I cannot expect to serve the Lord

much longer, but I will prepare the way as far as I can for those who will come after me." Many years ago, Dr. Rippon, the minister of this church, which then worshipped in New Park Street, was wont to prophesy about his successor. When he was very old, after having been pastor for more than sixty years, it is in the memory of some still living that he was accustomed to pray for the minister who should come after him. The old man was looked forward to one who should come and carry on the work after he was obliged to leave it. So must you and I do. We must be looking ahead as far as ever we can, not with unbelieving anxiety or unholy curiosity; but after the fashion in which David prepared abundantly before his death. If we cannot find a successor to enter upon our service when we have to leave it, yet let us do all we can to make his work the easier when he comes to it.

II. In the second place, let us ask a question even more practical than the first; **WHAT PARTS OF OUR GENERATION CAN WE SERVE?** It is truly written, "None of us liveth to himself:" we either help or hinder those amongst whom we dwell. Let us see to it that we serve our age, and become stepping-stones rather than stumbling-blocks to those by whom we are surrounded. We shall serve our generation best by being definite in our aim. In trying to reach everybody we may help nobody. The wise man tries to serve somebody in particular: where, then, should we make the effort? In answering that question, I divide the generation in which we live into three parts.

First, there is *the part that is setting*. Some are like the sun going down in the we set; they will be gone soon. Serve them, dear brethren. You that are in health and vigour, comfort them, strengthen them, and help them all you can. Be a joy to that dear old man, who has been spared to you even beyond the allotted threescore years and ten, and praise God for the grace that has upheld him through his long pilgrimage. Look on his grey hairs as a crown of glory; make his descent to the grave as easy as you can. He once was as young as you are; he once had the vigour that you have. Console him, cheer him, give him the respect that is due to his many years. Do not let him feel that you consider him an old fogey who lingers, superfluous, on the stage; but learn from his experience, imitate his perseverance, and ask God to be with you in your old age, as he is with him.

The second portion of our generation which we can serve is *the part that is shining*. I mean those in middle life, who are like the sun at its zenith. They are working hard, bearing the burden and heat of the day; as yet their bones are full of marrow, and they are strong men ready for service for the Lord. Seek to sustain their hands in every possible way. Help them all you can. As one of those in middle life, I especially ask the help of all my Christian brethren, members of this church, or of any other church, who can aid me by their sympathies and their prayers. Get closer to one another, and fill up the vacant spaces that death's arrows continue to make in our ranks. Suffer nothing to be left undone which may further the work of Christ, or help the people around you who are so quickly passing away. Many of us have been together for nearly forty years, and when, one after another, our dear brethren are taken away, let it be everybody's ambition to try to make up what shall be lacking through their departure. This is what is due to those who are like the shining part of our generation.

Specially, however, I want to speak to you about serving your own generation in *the part that is rising*; the young people who are like the sun in the east, as yet scarcely above the horizon. This part of our generation is specially the care of parents and Sunday-school teachers; but let us not leave it entirely to them. We can, most of us, do something to serve this portion of our generation before we fall asleep. Beloved, I commend to your care and attention the children and young people who abound in our midst. In them lies our hope for the future of God's cause on earth.

In the first place, they are the most reachable. Happily, we can get at the children. The mass of people in London go to no place of worship now; the old habit of attending church or chapel seems to have been given up; but the people will still let the children go to Sunday-school, even if they do it from no better motive than that of getting them out of the way in the afternoon, or in order that the house may be quiet without them. Anyhow, if you open a school anywhere in London, you can quickly get it filled with children. If you cannot do one thing, do another. If you cannot reach the fathers and the mothers, though you should earnestly try to get at them, yet, if you can reach the children, take care that you lose no opportunity of teaching them the things of God. This is the work that lies nearest to you; seek to accomplish it; and "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

Moreover, the children are the most impressible. What can we do with the man who is hardened in sin? The grace of God can reach him, I know; but the children as yet have not known these evil ways; they are horrified when they hear about them. Teach them. While yet the clay is soft, mould it for God. May the Lord himself help you, dear Sunday-school teachers, and others who labour amongst the children, to do you work right well! Nobly are you serving your own generation, and the generation to follow.

The salvation of the children ought to be sought with double diligence, for they will last the longest. If a man of sixty or seventy is converted, he will have only a short time for serving God here; for he will soon be gone. If a child is converted, a long life of usefulness may enrich the church of God. Therefore, look after the children. If you had a gathering of Christian men and women, and were to put the question to them, "How many of you were converted before you were one-and-twenty?" you would be greatly surprised to find that probably five out of six would answer that, in early years, they were led to know the grace of God, and trust in Christ as their Saviour. I tried the experiment one evening with a number of friends who had come together from different places. "How many of you owe your salvation to your father's prayers, your mother's instruction, or your Sunday-school teachers' influence in youth?" I asked; and almost every one out of a company of about five-and-twenty said that it was in early youth that God blessed some instrumentality to their conversion.

Remember, too, that those who are converted when children usually make the best saints. These of whom I have just spoken, who gave the answer that they were converted in their youth, were ministers of the gospel. I do not know whether the same rule is true among ordinary Christians; but among those who have become leaders of men, in nearly every case they yielded to Christ while they were young. Our thoughts at this time cannot but be occupied with our dear friend, William Olney, who has just been taken from us so suddenly, to our unutterable grief. He was as earnest as a youth as he was when he became an old man. Indeed, I never knew a moment when he was not earnest. I never even knew him to be dull or depressed; he seemed to be always joyous and glad. He would almost frighten me sometimes with his jubilation under pain; for when he was in agonies of suffering, and could only sit on the platform for a short time, there was never anything like depression about him. He was just as glad

and happy as if he had been in perfect health. I wish that it were so with all of us. Young Christians do become the best Christians. Early piety is usually eminent piety; so seek to catch the children while they are young, and train them for the Lord, then they will be ready to serve their generation in their turn.

We ought to look after the children, again, for they are specially named by Christ. He said, "Feed my sheep;" but he also said, "Feed my lambs." I would almost be inclined to say that the Lord made the same division of the generation as I have done. When he said, the first time, "Feed my sheep," he may have meant the old sheep. When he said, the second time, "Feed my sheep," he may have had specially in mind the middle-aged ones. There is no doubt that when he said, "Feed my lambs," he meant the young people. Christ gave the lambs a place all to themselves: "Feed my lambs." I wish Christians would consider more seriously how the children ought to be looked after by the church. I read, the other day, of a boy who wished to join in membership with the people of God. His father said that he was too young, and kept him back. He was big enough, however, to be sent out to fold the sheep one night. When he came in, his father said, "Jack have you folded the sheep?" "Yes," he said; "I folded all the *sheep*," laying great stress on the last word. "And did you put the lambs in?" asked his father. "No," he replied, "I left the lambs outside; they were too young to go in." "Oh, boy!" said the father; "you know more than I do, after all; they were the very ones that needed most to be folded. You may go and see the minister about joining the church as soon as you like." If any believers in Christ need specially to be taken into the church, it is those who have come to Jesus in their youth. I pray you, serve your generation by giving the children and young people your most loving attention and care.

Look after the children of this generation, again, for the dangers around them at the present time are almost innumerable. What a time this is for boys! You cannot read the daily papers without being shocked by the amounts of wrong-doing of mere boys. This is an age which seems to make snares on purpose to entrap them. There are "penny dreadfuls" enough to poison the whole generation; they are full of stories of crime with a false halo about it, so that it is made to seem like heroism. These vile stories are everywhere; perhaps your own boy has one, unknown to you, and is

reading it while you are sitting here. Everywhere traps are laid for the feet of our boys. Serve your generation by warning them of their danger and trying to keep them free from the evils by which they are surrounded. Satan gets the advantage over many a young life by causing even right things to be put to wrong uses; and in all sorts of ways he lays traps for young people. Oh, parents and teachers, do try to give your boys a backbone of moral honesty! Try to show them that they have not come into this world merely to please themselves; that there is something better to be done than that. Do not rest till you have led them to the Saviour, for no boy is safe until he is converted. No girl is safe in the streets of this city till she has a new heart and a right spirit. The times are perilous; yet if we speak a word of warning. We are called sour Puritans. It always makes me laugh when I am called a sour Puritan, because you know there is nobody with a quicker eye for fun, or with a deeper vein of mirth than I have. At the same time, I like to have humour, and anything of cheerfulness and brightness in life, consecrated to God. But when mirth is made a plank on which a man can go into sin and iniquity, then we will saw that plank into pieces. You must be saved from sin, young men; you must be kept from evil, young women, if you are to be truly happy. May God's grace put in your way wise, godly friends, parents, and teachers, who shall serve their generation by leading you in the paths of peace!

III. Now, I have done when I have tried, for just a minute or two, to answer this question: WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US WHEN OUR SAVIOUR IS DONE? "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." The day's work is done; the worker is weary; he falls on sleep: what can he do better? It was all "by the will of God.: To what part of the sentence do you think that clause belongs? Did David serve his generation by the will of God; or did he fall asleep by the will of God? Both. Guided by the will of God, he did his work on earth; and calmly resigned to the will of God, he prepared to die. Even when passing away, he served his generation by giving Solomon some last charges concerning the kingdom, saying, "I go the way of the earth; be thou strong, and show thyself a man." Over both his life and his death may be written the words, "By the will of God." Oh, that we may all so live, that even in death we may serve our generation; may it be true of us that "whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto

the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's"! Thus, "the will of God" shall be done both in our service and in our sleep.

David is an example of what will befall those who know Christ, at the end of their service. *He did not go to sleep till his work was done.* "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." Do not want to die till you have done your work. When brethren say, "Oh, I wish I could go to heaven! Oh, when shall I get home?" they remind me of a man who, when he begins work on Monday, says, "I wish it was Saturday night." We do not want servants like that, nor does God either. Be willing to live for two hundred and fifty years, if God wills it. Be willing to live until strength fails you, if God wills it; you can still bear your dying testimony to the Lord's faithful and unchanging love. Do not be in a hurry to go home to heaven. Do not want to go to sleep till you also have served your generation well. When David had served his generation, he fell on sleep. We are told that, in the early days of Christianity, when believers were falling asleep in Jesus, their friends did not bid them "good-bye," but "good-night." So we say, in the words of that beautiful hymn —

"Sleep on beloved, sleep, and take thy rest;
Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast:
We love thee well; but Jesus loves thee best —
Good-night! Good-night! Good-night!

Only 'good-night,' beloved-not 'farewell!'
A little while, and all his saints shall dwell
In hallowed union, indivisible —
Good-night!

Until we meet again before his throne,
Clothed in the spotless robe he gives his own,
Until we know even as we are known —
Good-night!"

But, next we are told that *when his work was done, he fell on sleep.* Did his soul sleep? By no means. It was not his soul that is spoken of here, for we read that he "saw corruption." Souls do not see corruption. Paul is speaking of David's body. "He fell on sleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption." His body fell into its last, long sleep, and saw corruption. If

you like to take the words in the wider sense, he was asleep as far as the world is concerned; he had done with it. No sorrow came to him, no earthly joy, no mingling with the strife of tongues, no girding his harness for the war. "He fell on sleep." He had nothing to do with anything that was under the sun. And that is the case with our dear friend whom we miss from his place to-day, and it will soon be the case also with you and with me. There is not much here worth stopping for; and when our work is finished, like David, we shall fall on sleep. We shall then be asleep to all the declensions of the age, all the strifes of men, and all else which gives us sorrow of heart.

Does this word further mean that *his dying was like going to sleep*? It usually is so with God's people. Some die with a considerable measure of pain; but, as a rule, when believers pass away, they just shut their eyes, and open them in heaven. I have had infinitely more pleasure at death-beds than I have had at weddings. I have been to many marriage-feasts, I have gone there at duty's call; but I can confirm what Solomon said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for it is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." I am not aware that I have gained anything at a wedding, but I have gained much at the dying bed, as I have seen the joy and peace and rapture of girls and youths, and men and women, passing away joyfully to be "forever with the Lord." I have known some of our number here who were too bashful and backward to ever say much for Christ when they were well; but when I sent to see them die, there was not a bit of bashfulness about them. They spoke out so boldly that I have said to them, "Why, if you get better, you must preach for me one of these Sundays"; and they have smiled and said that they would never get better. They have known this, and they have rejoiced to think that they were going where they would not need any preacher, but would see their Lord Jesus face to face. How they have brightened up at the mention of his dear name! Some of them have sung then, though I never knew them to sing before; and some of them have told of things which they seemed to see and hear, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, till God has revealed them to the departing spirit. You remember such dying beds, do you not? Was it your mother, or your father, who passed away in that glorious style? Perhaps it was a brother beloved, or a sister, or a friend. Well, if we know Christ, it shall be ours by-and-by to sleep in him. You who believe in Christ ought no more to dread death than

you dread going to sleep at night. You will, ere you sleep, commit yourself to God, and as you put your head on the pillow, the similitude of death will be upon you, even sleep which one has called “death’s cousin.” You will not be afraid of that. Why, then, should any dismay seize you in prospect of that which is but another sleep? Rather sing to yourself: —

“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay;
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through death lead the way.”

Let us follow where he leads. Perchance some of us may tarry until he comes again. There will be no death for such; they will but change the service of their generation for the service of the glorified. “Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Then, when the trumpet shall sound, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, those who sleep in Christ shall awake in resurrection splendour, and together we shall serve our Lord day and night in his temple for ever. Meanwhile, serve you own generation by the will of God; and if the Lord tarry, you will fall on sleep, even as David did. May God bless you who believe in Jesus, and save the unsaved who are in our midst, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON

— Acts 13:14-43

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 879, 694, 844.

The note at the end of last week’s sermon informed all readers that the long-dreaded blow had at length fallen, and that their much-loved preacher had been called to his heavenly home. His voice shall no more be heard on earth; but he will continue to speak for his Lord through the press, and especially by his sermons.

Attentions has been already directed to the overruling hand of God in the selection of the sermons to be published at this memorable time. The one for next week will be the third in the series preached in connection with the death of the late Mr. William Olney, the text being Ephesians 5:30; and the

following week, the address by Mr. Spurgeon, at Mr. William Olney's funeral service in the Tabernacle, will be published. A considerable portion of this address was *revised by Mr. Spurgeon's own hand*. With it the publishers will give *a portrait of the beloved preacher*, and also a portrait of the late Mr. W. Olney.

The revision of the weekly sermons, and the editorship of *The Sword and the Trowel* will remain in the hands of those who have carried on the work during Mr. Spurgeon's long illness. He was only able, personally, to revise two sermons throughout the many months that he was laid aside. These will now have a special value in the estimation of his many friends. They are the two entitled, "Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave", and A Stanza of Deliverance.

There is not much that can be recorded here concerning Mr. Spurgeon's last illness, and his falling asleep in Jesus. *The Sword and the Trowel* for March will contain an account of the varying experiences in the sunny land, from the time when he delivered his two New Years addresses until all that remained of him was borne away to the railway-station, *en route* for England, amid tokens of widespread sorrow and sympathy. Amongst other items of interest will be reports of the last two Sabbath evening services conducted by Mr. Spurgeon at the Hotel Beau Rivage; and later numbers of *The Sword and the Trowel* will furnish the readers with descriptions of "Mr. Spurgeon's last drives at Menton", with reproductions of photographs taken under his personal supervision.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

FOUND BY JESUS, AND FINDING JESUS

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, August 26th, 1894,

Delivered By

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's-Day Evening, June 24th, 1888.

“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

— John 1:43-45

For a soul to come to Jesus, is the grandest event in its history. It is spiritually dead till that day; but it then begins to live, and a saved man may reckon his age from the time in which he first knew the Lord. That day of first knowing Christ is important in the highest degree, because it affects all the man's past career; it sheds another light on all the years that have gone by. If he has lived in sin, as no doubt he has, the transaction of that day blots out all the sin. The day in which a man comes to Christ, that very day his transgressions and iniquities are blotted out, even as the thick clouds are driven from the sky when God's strong wind chases them away. Is not that a grand day in which our sins are cast into the depths of the sea so that henceforth it can be said of them, “They may be sought for, but they shall not be found; yea, they shall not be, saith the

Lord”? I say that the day in which a soul comes into contact with Christ is the greatest day of its history, because all the past is changed by it; and as for the present, what a different life does a man begin to live on the day in which he finds the Lord! He commences to live in the light instead of being dead in the darkness; he begins to enjoy the privileges of liberty, instead of suffering the horrors of slavery; he is started on the way to heaven, instead of continuing on the road to hell. He is such a new creature that he cannot tell how changed he is. One said to me, “Sir, the change in me is of this kind; either the whole world is altered, or else I am.” So is it when we are brought to know Christ; it is a real, total, radical change. With many, it is a most joyous alteration; they feel like the man who had been lame, and who, when Peter spoke to him in the name of Jesus, and lifted him up, so that his feet and ankle bones received strength, was not satisfied with walking, for we read, “He leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.” He was walking, and leaping, and praising God; do you wonder at it? If you had lost the use of your legs for a while, you would feel like leaping and praising God when you had them all right again; and thus is it with a soul when it first finds the Saviour. Oh! happy, happy day, when the miraculous hand of Christ takes away the infirmities of the soul, and makes the lame man to leap as a hart, and causes the tongue of the dumb to sing!

The day in which a man comes to Christ is also a wonderful day in its effect upon all his future. It is as when the helm of a ship is put right about; the man now sails in a totally different direction. His future will never be what his past was. There may be faults; there may be infirmities and shortcomings; but there will never be the old love of sin any more. “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” This is God’s own promise to us, given through his servant Paul. When Christ comes to our soul, he so breaks the neck of sin, that though it lives a struggling, dying life, and often makes a deal of howling in the heart, yet it is doomed to die. The cross of Christ has broken its back, and broken its neck, too, and die it must. Henceforth the man is bound for holiness, and bound for heaven.

Now, dear friends, have any of you come to Christ? I know that you have, the great mass of you, and I bless God, and so do you, that it is so with you; but if there are any of you who have never come to the Saviour, I

wish that this might be the night when you should find him. I am but a poor lame preacher; you are not often troubled with the sight of one sitting down and preaching; yet I think that if I had lost my legs, and had always to lie on my back, I would like even then to preach Christ crucified, and to

“Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found.”

I do pray that some of you to-night, made to think all the more by the infirmity of the preacher, may be led to seek and to find the Saviour, and then it shall be a happy day indeed for you, as it has been for so many more.

I am going to talk to you about Philip's conversion, and first, I ask you to notice, in our text, *the convert's description of it*: “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” That is Philip's description of it: “We have found Jesus.” It was a true description, but it was not all the truth; so, in the second place, we will notice *the Holy Spirit's description of it*: “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip” Philip's account of the incident is that he found Christ; but the Holy Spirit's record of it is that Christ found Philip. They are both true, however; although the latter is the fuller. We will talk a little about both descriptions of Philip's conversion.

I. First then, THE CONVERT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS COMING TO CHRIST is given in these words, “We have found...Jesus,” and what he says is perfectly true.

If any one of you is saved, it will be by finding Christ, by your personally making a discovery of him, as that man did who found the treasure that was hid in the field. There must be a search after Christ; but if there be a search after him, we may be certain of this one thing, that there will first be a consciousness of needing him.

Philip had sought Christ, or else he would never have said that he had found him; but, before that, *Philip knew that there was need of a Messiah*. When he looked round about on the world, and on the church, he said to

himself, “Oh, that the promised Messiah would come! There is great need of him. The people need him, the church needs him, the world needs him.” When Philip looked into his own heart, he said, “Oh, for the coming of the Messiah! I feel that I want him; I have urgent need of him.” Dear hearer, do you feel that you need a Saviour? You never will seek him until you do feel your need of him. You must recognize that there is sin in you, sin for which you cannot make atonement, sin that you cannot overcome. You must realize that you need another and a stronger arm than your own, that you need divine help, that you need One who can be your Brother, to sympathize with you, and be patient with you, and yet who can be the Mighty God to conquer all your sin for you. You do need a Saviour; that is the first thing that will prompt you to search for him.

Wanting a Messiah, *Philip read the Scriptures concerning him.* He speaks about Moses and the prophets, and of what they had written concerning the promised Deliverer. O my dear hearers, if you want to find Christ, you must search the Scriptures, for they testify of him! Oh, that you did search the Scriptures more, with the definite object of finding the Saviour! Probably, the great majority of unconverted people never read their Bibles at all; or they read only just enough to satisfy their curiosity, or their conscience. Perhaps they read the Bible as a part of literature which cannot be quite ignored; but they do not take down the Holy Book, and read it carefully and prayerfully, saying, “Oh, that I might find holiness here! Oh, that I might find Christ here!” If they did, it would not be long before they found Jesus. Well does Dr. Watts sing, —

“Laden with guilt, and full of fears,
I fly to thee, my Lord,
And not a glimpse of hope appears
But in thy written Word.

The volume of my Father’s grace
Does all my griefs assuage;
Here I behold my Saviour’s face
Almost in every page.”

He who reads the Bible with the view of finding Christ, will not be long before some passage of Scripture will seem to leap up, to attract his attention, as though it were set on fire, and then it will speak to him of

Jesus, whispering to him of the great sacrifice on Calvary, and speaking to his heart of divine love and mercy. Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be, — in the pages of Scripture, — and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus.

But then *Philip also gave himself to prayer*. We are not told so, but we feel sure of it. He asked the Lord to reveal Christ to him, to guide him to where the Christ would be, to let him know the Christ. Oh, if you want to be saved, be much in prayer! I do not mean merely saying prayers; what is the good of that? I do not mean simply saying fine words of your own, merely for the sake of uttering them. Prayer is communing with God; it is asking the Lord for what you really feel that you need. What waggon-loads of sham prayers are shot down at God's door, as if they were so much rubbish thrown away! Let it not be so with your prayers; but speak to the Lord out of your very soul when you come to the throne of grace. I cannot give you a better prayer than the one we have been singing, —

“Gracious Lord, incline Thine ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear;
Hear my never-ceasing cry;
Give me Christ, or else I die.

“Lord, deny me what Thou wilt,
Only ease me of my guilt;
Suppliant at Thy feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die.

“Thou dost freely save the lost!
Only in Thy grace I trust:
With my earnest suit comply;
Give me Christ, or else I die.

“Thou hast promised to forgive
All who in Thy Son believe;
Lord, I know Thou canst not lie;
Give me Christ, or else I die.”

With the open Bible before you to guide your understanding, kneel down, and say, "O God, graciously reveal Christ to me by thy Holy Spirit; bring me to know him, bring me this day to find him as my own Saviour!"

It is certain, also, that *Philip realized that he might claim the Messiah for himself*. One of the things that every man, who would find the Saviour, must do, is to make sure of his right to come and take the Saviour. The question that puzzles many is, "May I have the Saviour?" My dear friends, every sinner in the world is permitted to come and trust the Saviour, if he wills to do so. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "But," asks some troubled soul, "will Christ have me?" That is not the question; the question is, "Will you have Christ?" He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is you who cast out the Saviour, not the Saviour who casts you out. The bolt to the door is on the inside; it is you who have bolted it, and it is you who must undo the bolt, and invite the Saviour to enter your heart. He is willing enough to come in; wherever there is a soul that wants him, he comes at once; therefore, do not raise any quibbling questions about whether a sinner may come to Christ, or may not come. Is he not bidden to come? We are told to preach the gospel to every creature, and he who gave us our great commission also added, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Philip accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you ask, "What am I to do that I may find the Saviour?" Well, what you have to do is practically this, accept him. If you were sick, and the doctor stood before you, with the medicine ready prepared, you would not say, "What am I to do with this medicine, sir? Am I to rub my hand on the outside of the bottle?" You know very well that there are certain directions as to how much is to be taken, and how often. What you have to do with the medicine is to take it. "But I cannot make that medicine work for my restoration." Who said you could? All you have to do is to take it. It is just this that you have to do with Christ; take him, accept him, receive him. Remember the twelfth verse of this chapter out of which our text is taken: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." That is it, you see, receive him, believe on his name. "But surely I am to do some good works." Certainly, you will do good works after you have received Christ; but for your soul's salvation, you

are to do no good works, but simply to receive Christ. “Oh, but I must lead a holy life!” Yes, and you will lead a holy life after you have received Christ; but in order to the leading of a holy life you must have a new heart, and to get a new heart, you have to receive Christ. He will change you, he will renew you, he will make you a new creature in himself. What you have to do is to receive him, and to believe on his name. O my dear hearers, I do trust that I am speaking to some this evening who will understand what I am saying. I fear that I am addressing many who will not believe, though I may put the truth as plainly as it can be preached. You know that you may hold a candle right against a blind man’s eyes, and yet he will not see even then. The Holy Spirit must open your eyes to see what is meant by this receiving Christ, or else you will not understand what you are to do. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to give anything to Christ; you are to take all from him. You are not to bring anything to Christ; you are to come to him just as you are, and he will bring to you everything that you need. Then, when you have accepted him by the simple act of faith, you will say with Philip, “We have found Jesus.” That is the convert’s description, and a very good one, too: “We have found Jesus.”

II. But now, secondly, what is THE HOLY GHOST’S DESCRIPTION? I will read to you the very words again; here they are: “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philipians ” Jesus finds Philip before Philip finds Jesus; Philip finds Jesus because Jesus has found Philipians

Now, notice, that *this is the previous work*; it came before Philip’s own finding. Jesus would go forth into Galilee to find Philipians Dear friends, I recollect very well that, after I had found the Lord, I did not at first fully understand the doctrines of grace. I had heard them preached; but I had not comprehended them. I think at the time I should have been very much puzzled with the doctrine of election, if anybody had spoken to me about it; but I was sitting down, one day, gratefully reflecting on what God had done for me. I knew that my sins were pardoned, I knew that I was accepted in Christ Jesus, and I knew that I was renewed in heart, and in one moment the revelation came to me, “All this is the work of God.” The instant I saw that truth, I said to myself, “Yes, that is the fact, and God be glorified for it! But why has this great work been wrought in me?” I knew

that there was no merit in me before the Lord had dealt in mercy with my soul, so I said to myself, "This is the effect of sovereign distinguishing grace." Then I understood in a moment how it is that God begins with us, and that it is God's will and God's eternal purpose, which, after all, lie deeper down than our will or our purpose; and God's will and God's eternal purpose must have the glory. What a revelation it was to me! I saw the doctrines of grace immediately; and I think that anybody who has been brought to find the Saviour, and who prayerfully studies the reasons for his salvation, can see the same truth that the Lord revealed to me. Because, first of all, you began to be thoughtful, did you not? Who made you thoughtful? You would never have found the Saviour if you had not become thoughtful instead of careless and indifferent. Who made you think of divine things? What influence was it which wrought upon you, and caused you to feel that you must think about eternity, and heaven, and hell? Surely it was God the Holy Ghost going forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, and dealing with you in mercy.

Then you had a sense of your need and of your sinfulness. There was a time when you had no such sense; then, who gave it to you? Where do you think that repentance, that sorrow for sin, that desire after Christ, came from? Did all that grow in your own fallen human nature? Ah, believe me, that dunghill never brought forth such fair flowers as these! No, it was Christ who sowed the good seed in your soul; it was he who made you feel your need of him.

Next, when you read the Bible, you understood it. You perceived that Jesus was the only Saviour of sinners, you saw his fitness to meet your case, and you understood the plan of salvation. Who made you understand it? I know that it is plain enough for a child to comprehend; but no one ever does understand spiritual things except by the operation of the Spirit of God. It was the Holy Spirit who gave you the spiritual power by which you were able to grasp the simple truth concerning the way of salvation.

Then you began to pray. I have spoken of that matter already. But who taught you to pray? You had not been accustomed to real prayer; you had often had great mouthfuls of words, that was all; but now you began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, the groaning of your spirit, and the anguish of your heart, as you cried to God! Who gave you that anguish? Who broke you all to pieces, and made every broken bone cry out

for mercy? Who, indeed, but Christ who wrought mightily in your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit?

And when you yielded yourself up to Christ, when you believed in Jesus, and found salvation, where did that faith come from? Is it not always the work of the Spirit of God? Is not faith the gift of God, and do you not confess that it is so in your case? Once, when I was a little child, I thought I saw a needle moving across the table; and I should have been wondering who made the needle march as it did, but I was old enough to understand that somebody was moving a magnet underneath the table, and the needle was following the magnet which I could not see. Thus the Lord, with his mighty magnet of grace, is often at work upon the hearts of men, and we think that their desire after God, and their faith in Christ, are of themselves. In a sense, the desire and the faith are their own; but there is a divine force that is at work upon them, producing these results. It is Jesus finding Philip, though Philip does not know it. Philip thinks that he is finding Jesus, but behind the veil it is Jesus finding Philip. This was the previous work.

And, dear friends, *this was very delightful work for the Lord Jesus Christ.* Notice how it is put: “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip.” O my blessed Lord, how he will go forth to find a soul! A journey is never too long for him, and he never wastes a day. “The day following Jesus would go forth, and findeth Philip.” Oh, may my Lord delight to come forth, and find some of you! You are to-night in a place where he has found a good many; I pray that he may find some of you. Perhaps you do not know how it was that you came here. You did not mean to come out to-night; but here you are in this crowd, in the thick of this great throng. My Lord has found many a precious jewel here; to its own self it seemed nothing but a poor pebble, but to him it was a diamond of the first water. O my Master, find some more of thy jewels to-night! Lord Jesus, come and find Philip, and find Mary, and then let Philip and Mary declare that they have found thee!

When our dear Master goes forth to find a soul, *it is very effectual work.* He said to Philip, “Follow me.” I will gladly end my sermon just here if my Master will preach to some of you his two-worded sermon, “Follow me,” “*Follow me,*” “FOLLOW ME.” “Come, poor soul, you do not know the way! ‘Follow me.’ You want some one to go before you, to be your

leader. 'Follow me.' You want some one to be your shelter, your companion, your all. 'Follow me.'" That is what you have to do, good woman. You have been worrying about what you have heard from different preachers; Christ says to you, "Follow me." That is what you have to do, young man. You have been reading those rubbishing modern thought books till you do not know whether you are on your head or on your heels. Burn them. Jesus says, "Follow me." I know that some of you have been distracted with all sorts of silly talk; let that go to the dogs. Jesus says, "Follow me." The crucified Saviour says, "Follow me." Take him for your atonement. The risen Saviour says, "Follow me." Take him for your life. The Saviour on the throne says, "Follow me." Take him for your joy. The Saviour coming in glory hereafter says, "Follow me." Take him to be your hope. "Follow me," "Follow me," that is the text for to-night, and that is the sermon, too. Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me," and Philip followed him directly; and he not only followed Christ himself, but he began immediately to try to get others to follow him.

Please to notice also that *Philip was found by Christ in a very different way from the other disciples*. Two of them had been found through the teaching of John the Baptist; but Philip had apparently had no teaching. Another of the little company had been found through the private call of his brother; Philip may not have had any relative or friend to speak to him, but the Saviour just said to him, "Follow me," and he followed him. Dear friends, do not begin comparing your conversion with somebody else's. If the Lord Jesus Christ calls you, and says to you, "Follow me," and you follow him, if there never was another soul converted in exactly the same way, it does not matter at all. If you have come to him, if you have trusted in him, you are saved.

The pith of all that I have to say is this. Do not get worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose, and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit, and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when he bids you. They are perfectly consistent. Some persons have asked me at times to reconcile these two things; and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them." It would be quite as easy to state them as to meet them, for in fact there are none. "Oh, but," says one, "you tell me to believe in Christ, and yet you constantly preach that faith is the work of the Spirit of God." I

do. "And yet you say that men are to choose Christ?" I do. "Well, how do you reconcile those two things?" Show me that there is any difficulty about the two things, and then I will reconcile them. You imagine the difficulty, for there is none in reality, there does not exist any in practical life. I believe that God has predestinated whether I am going down to the Lord's supper at the close of this service; but I shall go down as well as my legs can carry me. "Oh!" say you, "you make it out to be a matter of your own free will?" Yes, I do. "And yet you believe it to be God's eternal purpose?" Yes, I do. "Well, then, reconcile the two things." Again I say that there is no difficulty in the case, there is nothing to be reconciled, for both statements are true. You might as well ask me to reconcile the land and the water, or to reconcile the dog star, Sirius, and a farthing rushlight. There is no quarrel between them, and I have no time to waste on needless argument. Come you to Christ; and if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you. If you find the Saviour, it will be because the Saviour first found you. Perhaps, in heaven, you may see some difficulties, and get them explained; down here, you need not see them, and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's grace, from first to last; yet is it true that the grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning, — to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

I have done when I have said this one thing more. Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, were all of Bethsaida: "Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." These three good men, these three apostles, were all of Bethsaida. That ought to be some comfort to many of you, my dear hearers, because there are numbers of you, who are here to-night, who are of Bethsaida. Sitting all round me, I see people who, I believe, are of Bethsaida. "Oh!" say you, "we never were there in all our lives." Listen. Bethsaida was one of the places in which Christ had done many of his mighty works; and you remember that, when the people repented not, Jesus uttered over them that sad lamentation, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou,

Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.”

Now, there are some of you here who have heard the gospel for many years, and have seen the power of the grace of God in your families, and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than it will be for you, inasmuch as you have rejected the Saviour. But, as there were these three men, Philip, and Peter, and Andrew, who were of Bethsaida, — and I should think that the home of James and John was not very far off from the same place, — why should not you come to Christ? Why should not you become members of his Church, and, if it be the Lord’s will, preachers of his Word? God grant that it may be so!

Oh, how I long in my soul for the salvation of every one of you! Many of you, who have come here to-night, are strangers to me. I trust that you will not be strangers to my Master. To-night, I pray you, here in the very heat of midsummer, ere yet the harvest shall be past, and the summer shall be ended, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Receive Christ, trust in him. God grant that you may do so, for Jesu’s sake! Amen.

NOTE: See the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, “Moses: his faith and Decision.”

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

KEPT FROM INIQUITY

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-day Morning, September 29th, 1895,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,

On Thursday Evening, September 22nd, 1887.

“I kept myself from mine iniquity” — Psalm 18:23

In our reading we had a very wonderful description of God's delivering mercy towards his servant David. He was very peculiarly tried in the court of Saul; he deserved so well of the king that it was doubly hard for him to be treated so ill. He had been the deliverer of his country when he slew Goliath, yet he was hunted as if he had been the grossest of malefactors. He had to fly for his life, like a partridge upon the mountains, and all the while, no doubt, Saul and his partisans accused him of all manner of evil. There was scarcely any bad thing which they did not attribute to David; but he was upright before God, and he dared to challenge the investigation of the Most High, for he was sincere and true to the core. He proved by his conduct that he was so; for when Saul was in his hands, on two memorable occasions when he might readily have taken his life, he disdained to do so. He would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and in great grace, in his own good time, God was pleased to deliver his servant. If men blow out the candle of a Christian's reputation, God will light it again; if he does not do so in this life, remember that at the resurrection there will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the

kingdom of their Father.” It is, after all, of very small account what is said by men whose breath is in their nostrils. “They say. What do they say? Let them say.” Let them say till they have done saying; it little matters what they say; yet, to a sensitive spirit, like that of David, the tongue is a very sharp instrument, it cutteth like a razor, and pierceth even to the bones. He felt, therefore, the slander of many, and was sometimes greatly troubled by it. However, God was pleased to work a very marvelous deliverance for him. It seemed as if the Lord would sooner shake the earth to atoms, and crush the arches of heaven, than fail to deliver his servant. He will do so still, depend upon it. “He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

David attributes his providential deliverance to the mercy of God by which he had been kept clear in his conduct: “I kept myself from mine iniquity.” Whatever you do, if you do right, God will see you through; but, whoever you may be, if you turn aside to crooked ways, you will soon fall into a bog. If you try to carve for yourself, you will probably cut your own fingers. He who thinks that he can do better by suppressing truth, or by speaking falsehood, or by acting contrary to the dictates of his conscience, will find that he has made a great mistake. Do thou so trust in God as to hold to thine integrity. “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” Ponder the path of thy feet, and God will bring thee through as surely as he is alive, which is saying much more than if I said as surely as thou art alive; for, as the Lord liveth, before whom we stand, he will not forsake the righteous, nor cast off them that serve him faithfully.

This is the passage we have to consider, “I kept myself from mine iniquity.” Here is, first, *a personal danger*: “mine iniquity.” And, secondly, here is *a special guard*: “I kept myself.” And then, thirdly, here is *a happy result*. David could say, as he looked back upon his life, “I kept myself from mine iniquity.” There was no boasting in this declaration; but as his enemies accused him falsely, like an honest man he defended himself, for he was able truthfully to say, “I kept myself from mine iniquity.”

I. Well now, here is, first, A PERSONAL DANGER: “mine iniquity.”

This is a dreadful possession to have in the house; a man had better have a cage of cobras than have an iniquity, yet we have each of us to deal at home with some special form of sin. It is said that there is a skeleton in every house. I do not know whether that is true; but I do know that there is something very much allied to a skeleton, that is, the body of this death with which we all have to deal; and it takes a special shape in each good man. There is some particular sin which he may call “mine iniquity.” Not only is there the general iniquity which affects the whole race, but each man has his own particular form of it: “All we like sheep have gone astray; *we have turned every one to his own way.*” There is a general sin, but there is a particularity in it, too; each man has his own way of sinning, so that he can speak of “mine iniquity.”

Let us think of the particular form of iniquity with which some of us have to do. It takes its speciality, perhaps, *from our natural constitution*. He who judges all men alike does them an injustice. There are some who have but little tendency to a particular form of evil, but they have a very great inclination towards some other sin. Some are sanguine; they are expecting great things, and they fall into the sin of expecting to drink sweet waters from the cisterns of this world. There are some of quite another temperament, who are inclined to despondency, perhaps to suspicion; they may fall into mistrust, or various forms of unbelief, and even into despair, which will be very grievous to the God who is ever gracious. There are some men who, from their very parentage, are inclined to drunkenness or to unchastity. There are others, favoured by God with a godly ancestry who, if they were left to themselves, would not probably fall into either of these forms of sin, yet they might be proud of their own integrity, and proud of their own uprightness; and is not pride as great a sin as those more open transgressions? Depend on it, my dear friend, thou hast some tendency peculiar to thyself, and there is a special point where thou liest open to the attacks of temptation. Happy will that man be who so knows himself that he sets a double watch against that postern gate through which the adversary is apt to creep in the dark. Peculiar constitutions may lead to special forms of sin, and it behoves the godly man to keep himself from his own iniquity.

Our tendency is to decry the particular form of sin that we find in others. We hold up our hands as if we were quite shocked. Better look in the looking-glass than look out at the window. Looking out of the window, thou seest one for whom thou art not responsible; but looking in the glass, thou seest one of whom thou must give account to God, and thou wilt do well to ask God to keep that one. Thou wilt, likely enough, within a day's march, not see a much worse man than he is, if thou dost know him well. I remember Mr. Berridge's quaint joke. He had, hanging round his room, the portraits of many ministers; and he would say to his friend, "Here is Whitefield, here is Wesley, here is So-and- so;" and then, leading his visitor to a looking-glass, he would say, "Here is the devil." Yes, he is somewhere about there where thou art looking. If thou lookest long enough, thou mayest detect some of his handiwork at any rate, for there is something of his work about us all. Sin, therefore, may be something peculiar to constitution.

But any man may also know that "mine iniquity" may be *engendered by education*. How impressible we are in childhood! We bear the print of our mother's fingers when we are fifty years of age, and it is not gone from us even when we are old and grey-headed. Things that were done at our father's home are likely to be done in our own home. Things that we saw, things that we heard, when we were very young, may abide with us, and help to shape our whole life. May God help us so to look back upon our early training as to discover the defects of it, and, not laying the sin upon others, which would be a wicked perversion of the truth, yet let us recollect that, as we lived in a sinful generation, we have acquired some taint therefrom, and we have need to watch against the sins which were taught us when we were young, especially any of you who have been rescued by grace out of homes of drunkenness and debauchery! I bless the Lord that there are many here who have been brought by sovereign grace out of very dens of iniquity. There are some here who are, so far as they are aware, the only ones of all their household who know the Lord; and when they go home to-night, it will be a great pain to them, as they cross the threshold, to think how very different the atmosphere will be from that in the house of God where they have worshipped. Well, my dear brother or sister, we sympathize with you in your trial, and pray the Lord that you may carefully watch and that you may be kept from your iniquity.

No doubt there are certain forms of iniquity which grow *out of our particular condition*. The young man has his iniquity; it is not the iniquity of the aged. The young man is tempted to sinful pleasure, the old man to covetousness. Each period of life has its own special snare. Pray, I beseech you, young people, middle-aged people, old people, pray the Lord that you may be kept from the peculiar iniquity of that part of the life-passage through which you are going. He who quits the shores of England for Australia may ask the guardian care of God while yet the white cliffs of Albion have scarcely melted from his view. Let him ask God's blessing as he passes through the middle passage of the Suez Canal; but let him not forget to pray when the captain tells him that, within a few days, he will come in sight of the southern shore. No, all along we need keeping.

It is so with our condition of life as to our outward circumstances. The rich man has his temptations. Few know how great they are, or they would not be so eager after riches. It is as hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is a natural impossibility, for so many difficulties surround the possession of riches; but with God all things are possible. Yet the poor man will not find that he has a much larger hole to go through. His straitened circumstances will not materially help him. Agur did well to pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." There are peculiar trials in each condition; and even the middle way between the two is not without its own special temptations; so that, whether thou hast much or little, pray God that thou mayest keep thyself from thine iniquity.

There are iniquities which come through prosperity. I have never yet prayed to God to preserve me in going up in a balloon, for I have never had any idea of entering one; but whenever you prosper very greatly, and especially when you prosper very fast, you are very like a man going up in a balloon. If people knew the danger, they would send in prayers to the Monday night prayer-meeting, asking that the Lord would have mercy upon the man who is greatly prospering, for there are very peculiar trials surrounding that condition. Oh, that men might be kept from that cleaving to the world and letting the Saviour go, which so often follows upon great success in life!

But equally must he pray who is in adversity. Oh, the ills of adversity! The worst ill of all is the tendency to doubt God, and to put forth your

hand unto iniquity in order to remove the heavy load. Pray the Lord, thou who art losing everything, that he will keep thee from thine iniquity. Thou needest not pray, like Pharaoh, "Take away the frogs;" but pray like David, "Take away mine iniquity." That is the prayer of the true child of God.

I may be speaking to some who have great talents. Well, you have need to pray, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity," for great talent is a very dangerous thing for a man to possess, a charge which needs great grace. And, if thou hast but one talent, thine iniquity may be to wrap it in a napkin, and hide it in the earth. There is a temptation in the one talent as well as in the five. Therefore, pray the Lord to keep thee from that iniquity which is often the accompaniment of the particular condition in which thou art found.

Brothers, there are some of you who have need to pray this prayer in reference to your calling. I do not think that any calling is free from temptation, but there are some positions in which the temptation is very terrible. I need not go into those which surround many of you in trade, when everybody seems to "cut the thing fine," as they say, and to cut the truth much finer than anything else, and say a great deal that is not true, under the notion that somehow or other it will help his business. If there be customs in your trade which all others follow, and which you know to be wrong, do not adopt them; but say, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity." You need not begin to say, "Those grocers, those milk-dealers, those publicans, all have their iniquities." Think about your own; quite enough iniquities may crowd into your shop without your thinking about the shops of other people. Pray the Lord that you may be kept from your iniquity.

And, O beloved, what iniquities there are which surround us all in daily life! Into what company can you go without being tempted? In this city, at the present time, the position of a Christian is very much like that of Lot in Sodom. I speak what I do know; I do not exaggerate the conditions which surround the lives of some Christian working-men and Christian working-women who are not able to let their children go into our streets by reason of the filthiness of the language that they would hear. Even round about this house of prayer is a very cauldron of iniquity, so that many say, "We cannot live there, and we do not know where to live to keep our

children out of the temptations which now surround them.” I say not that one age is worse than another, but I do say that the peculiar trials of to-day should make Christians walk very near to God; and, instead of loosening and relaxing the lines of our religious profession, let us tighten them as much as ever we can, and seek to be thoroughly Nonconformist, not conforming to the world, to be out and out Dissenters, dissenting from the ways of this ungodly generation.

Still, to help you to find out your iniquity, I will make one or two more remarks. It is likely to be *that iniquity which thou hast oftenest fallen into in thy previous life*. What has been thy sternest struggle? Against quickness of temper? Then, that is thine iniquity. Doubt and mistrust? That is thine iniquity. Has it been covetousness? Has it been slowness to forgive any who have offended you? Has it been gossiping and mixing untruth with your talk? That is your iniquity. Whatever it is which hitherto has stained thy life, that is probably the thing which will stain it again unless thou dost watch, and call in the power of the Holy Spirit for thy protection. That sin which you find yourself readily committing, which you drift into without any effort, ay, which you drift into when you are making a great many efforts not to do it, that is your iniquity. That which you have returned to after having smarted for it, that which you have vowed you would never be guilty of again, and which yet has in a moment, like the bursting forth of some hidden spring of water, carried thee away with a rush, — that is thine iniquity. Oh, how canst thou keep thyself from it unless God shall keep thee? Cry unto the Most High to enable thee to keep thyself from thine iniquity. That is thine iniquity which has overtaken thee even after thou hast prayed against it, and laboured against it, that thou hast concluded that surely thou wilt never do it again, and yet thou hast done it.

Let me tell you one thing more; *that which you do not like to hear condemned*, that which you do not like the preacher to mention, that which makes you to wriggle in your seat, and feel, “I wish he would not say that, he is coming too closely home,” that is your iniquity. And if thou canst not bear that thy wife should speak to thee about it, or that thy brother or thy sister should give thee a friendly word of advice concerning it, that which thou art most loth to hear, probably has to do with thine iniquity. We may often judge ourselves by this test. It is that which thou

art most loth to hear that thou hast most need to hear; instead of being angry with him who points it out to thee thou shouldst be willing to pay him for doing it. When you go to your doctor, and ask him to examine you, if he says, "There is something a little amiss with the heart, or with the lungs," do you knock him down? Do you get into a passion with him for telling you the truth? No, you give him his guinea, and thank him even for imparting evil news. And should we not thank those who rebuke us, and tell us of our faults? When God sendeth thee not a faithful friend, I pray him to send thee an honest enemy, who will deal straightly with thee, and let thee know where thy weakness is, that thou mayest then cry to God, "Lord, keep me from mine iniquity."

II. Now, secondly, in our text there is A SPECIAL GUARD: "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

Someone may perhaps say, "I have a special temptation, but I am going to set a guard against it." Let me ask you first who you are; are you a child of God? Have you passed from death unto life? If you say, "No," I am not referring to you in this part of my subject. You must be born again, you must go by faith to Jesus Christ, and ask for cleansing in his precious blood, and renewal by the Holy Spirit; but I am now talking to the child of God, the man who has spiritual life. I speak to you, my dear brother, because you can, by God's grace, keep yourself from your iniquity. How are you to do it?

Well, first, you must *find out what it is*. You must get a clear idea of your own iniquity. Ask the Lord to search you, and try you, and know your ways. When you have found out what that iniquity is, then endeavour to *get a due sense of its foulness and guilt in the sight of God*. Ask the Lord to make thee hate most that sin to which thou art most inclined. Remember that thou art a child of God; it ill becomes thee to be friendly with any of the King's enemies. Remember that Christ has bought thee; thou belongest to him, thou shouldst not be the slave of any sin, thou must not be such if the life of God be in thee. The life of God in the soul hates sin; thou canst not take pleasure in any sin if thou art inded a regenerate man or woman. Therefore, I say to thee, seek to get a sight of the heinousness of thy particular sin and the danger which attends it, that, as thou hast an extraordinary horror of it, thou mayest set that over against thy tendency to it.

Then, *be resolved in the power of the Holy Spirit that this particular sin shall be overcome*. There is nothing like hanging it up by the neck, that very sin, I mean. Do not fire at sin indiscriminately; but, if thou hast one sin that is more to thee than another, drag it out from the crowd, and say, "Thou must die if no other does. I will hang thee up in the face of the sun." Strive against thine anger; strive against thy covetousness; strive against thine envy; strive against thine evil temper, thy malice, if that be thy fault; for there are some who are very slow to forgive. Strive against it till thou gettest thy foot upon its neck. "I cannot do it," says one. Why, the Lord has said that he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly! Surely, if you are to have the devil under your foot, you can get all sin under your feet by God's help; and you must do it. It is a part of that work that must be wrought in us to bring every thought into captivity to divine grace. You are not able to subdue the least sin apart from Christ; but, by the help of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing that can master thee. I tell thee that, if thou let any sin master thee, thou wilt be lost. If any sin should remain unconquered, thou art ruined; for this is the way of salvation, the absolute conquest of every sin through the grace of the Holy Spirit. It must be so with thee ere thou canst enter heaven, and thou art able to overcome it in the power of Jesus Christ. If thou hast an iniquity that more than another haunts thee, then keep away from all that tempts thee to it. Is there a house where thy company is much liked, but where thou art never able to come away without having fallen into sin? Keep away from that house. It is often one of the most essential things in young converts that they should quit the company in which they once sported. You may go into some company to do good; but mind that you are strong enough to resist the evil, for it does not always do for those who have but little strength to attempt to pull others out of the fire; they may be themselves pulled into it. No, come ye out from among them, be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing. You have no business to be in that place where it becomes almost necessary that you should sin; that necessity should warn you not to go there.

The true path of safety is to *pray and believe against all sin*. We conquer sin by faith in Christ. This is the axe that will cut down the upas tree, and there is no other that will do so. Believe thou in Jesus Christ the Saviour, who died for thee; and then believe in him as living again, and willing to help thee in every conflict against sin. Go thou, having Christ crucified

with thee, and ask him to crucify thy sin, and nail it up to his cross. So thou shalt be helped to overcome; but there must be care, and prayer, and watchfulness, and trust, and continual looking up to the Lord for grace. Only so can you say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

III. Thirdly, I conclude with A HAPPY RESULT.

David says, "I kept myself from mine iniquity." He does not say that he could not sin, but that he would not, and he did not. When a wicked man gets old, he may say, "I do not sin like those young people." No, because you cannot; it has been well said that there is many an old man who, if you could put young eyes in him, would look the same way as he used to do. That is not what we want; it is not the failure to commit a sin because your passions have grown colder, or your strength has left you; it is a change of heart that is wanted. "I kept myself from mine iniquity;" that is, "though it would try to tempt me, and did so, and I might have yielded to it, yet by the grace of God I would not yield."

I do pray, my brothers and sisters, that, if we live ten, twenty, thirty, or fifty more years, we may be able to say, without any boasting, but in deep humility before God, "By his great grace, by trust in Jesus, I kept myself from mine iniquity," because, if we do so, *see what a blessing it will be to us*, for it will be to us a reason for our being brought out of the trouble. If when you are in need, if when you are under temptation, God helps you to keep straight, you will come out all right at the last. What a number of stories I might tell here of young men, who were great losers at first by being godly; but they kept themselves right, and they had to thank God for it ever afterwards. I know, at this present moment, a personal friend who was a banker's clerk. On a certain day, he was told to do something which he judged to be, speaking plainly, dishonest; and he told the manager that he could not do it, whereupon he received a month's notice. It was a country bank, and he was not sent about his business at once; and he had to turn the matter over. He had a wife and children; and when he went home, it was not easy to tell the wife that the excellent situation that he held would be vacated within a short time. But he stood fast in his integrity, he said that he was sure God would bring him safely through, and he never had even the slightest thought of doing other than he had said he would do. It was within twelve months that he obtained the situation of manager for that very bank, and it belongs to him at this moment; he very

speedily became a man in a much better position than he could have expected to have obtained, simply from the fact that it had been proved that he could be trusted. It is not always so; some people have to be a long time under a cloud; but, in the long run, if thou as a child of God wilt but stand fast, God will not let thee be a loser. If he does, it shall be thy glory to lose everything sooner than tarnish thy character. Thou shalt find it a greater joy to lose all things for Christ than it would be to gain the whole world by doing anything that was wrong. If you are able to say, "I kept myself from mine iniquity," then you shall also be able to say with David, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised."

Next, if you act thus, *it will be a triumph of divine grace*. Brethren, we want to show the world what grace can do, and every member of the church ought to feel that he is put upon his behaviour to prove what the grace of God has done in him. What credit is brought to Christ by professed Christians who are so like worldlings that, if you put them under a microscope, you could not tell the difference between them? If you can do what worldlings do, you shall go at last where worldlings go. If grace does not make you to differ from them, it is not the grace of God, it is all a sham. We ought to feel that Christ's honour is in danger by our ill behaviour, and so live that we can glorify our Father who is in heaven by our good works, keeping ourselves from our iniquity.

For again, *this will be our best testimony to others*. It is well to preach as I do, with my lips; but you can all preach with your feet, and by your lives, and that is the most effective preaching. The preaching of holy lives is living preaching. The most effective ministry from a pulpit is that which is supported by godliness from the pew. God help you to do this!

And, lastly, *what a sweet peace this will give to your conscience!* Though we know we are saved by grace, hear this, ye ungodly. There is no way of salvation for you, or for us, but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ; yet when we are saved, the evidence to our own soul of that work of grace upon our nature is very sweet when we can say, "I have kept myself from mine iniquity." A well-spent life, a life that is pure, a life that has been consecrated to usefulness, a life in which there has not been a turning aside to the right hand or to the left, helps us to lie down with comfort upon our

dying bed, and bid farewell to all our dear ones and feel that we are leaving behind us the legacy of a gracious example in which we do not glory, but for which we give God the glory, and thank and praise his holy name. Begin at the cross; there is the source of your salvation. Then go, and live like the living Saviour. God help you to do so, for Christ's sake!

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

A NEW YEAR'S BENEDICTION

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Thursday Evening, September 3rd, 1868.

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

— Hebrews 13:5

Observe the way in which the apostles were accustomed to incite believers in Christ to the performance of their duties. They did not tell them, “You must do this or that, or you will be punished; you must do this, and then you shall obtain a reward for it.” They never cracked the whip of the law in the ears of the child of God. They knew the difference between the man who was actuated by sordid motives and the fear of punishment, and the new-born man who is moved by sublimer motives, namely, motives that touch his heart, that move his regenerated nature, and that constrain him, out of affection, to do the will of him that sent him. Hence the address here is not, “Be content, or else God will take away what you have,” but “Be content, and have naught to do with covetousness, for he hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

The promise is made the argument for the precept. Obedience is enforced by a covenant blessing. He hath said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake

thee”; what then? Shall I be discontented and covetous? Nay! but for the very reason that he has made, by his promise, my very safety absolute and unconditional, assuring me, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” for that reason I will keep out of my conversation covetousness and every other evil thing, and will seek to walk contentedly and happy in the presence of my God. See, brethren, this gospel motive. It is a free grace argument. It is not a weapon taken from the arsenal of Mount Sinai, but taken from the region of the cross, and from the council-chamber of the covenant of love.

Another thing in the text, to which I would call your notice is this: that an inspired apostle, who might very well have used his own original words, nevertheless in this case, as indeed in many others, quotes the Old Testament. “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Behold, then, the value of Holy Scripture. If an inspired man quotes the text, as of divine authority, much more should we so regard it, who are without such inspiration. We should be much in searching the Scriptures, and when we want to clench an argument, or answer an opponent, it would always be well for us to take our weapon from the grand old Book, and come down with “He hath said.” Oh! there is nothing like this for force and power. We may think a thing, but what of that? Our thinkings are but of little worth. General authority and universal opinion may sustain it, but what of that? The world has been more frequently wrong than right, and public opinion is a fickle thing. But “He hath said,” that is to say, God hath said — immutable truth and eternal fidelity have said; God that made heaven and earth, and that changeth not, though nations melt like the hoar frost of the morning; God who ever liveth when hills, and mountains, and this round world, and everything upon it shall have passed away — “He hath said.” Oh! the power there is in this, “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” So, then, let us be much in searching the Scriptures, much in feeding upon them, much in diving into their innermost depths, and then afterwards much in the habit of quoting them, using them as arguments for the defence of truth, as weapons against error, and as reasons to call us to the path of duty, and to pursue it.

But now to come to the promise itself, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” I shall call your attention, first of all, to: —

I. THE REMARKABLE CHARACTER OF THIS PROMISE.

Is it not a wonderful and arrestive fact that, whilst others do leave us and forsake us, that God never does? It is to each one of his own redeemed people that he says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." How often do men play false, and forsake those whom they call their friends when those friends fall into poverty! Ah! the tragedies of some of these cruel forsakings! May you never know them! These so-called friends knew their friends when that suit of black was new, but how sadly their eyesight fails them now it is turned to a rusty brown! They knew them extremely well when once a week they sat with their legs under their table and shared their generous hospitality, but they know them not now that they knock at their door and crave help in a time of need.

Matters have changed altogether, and friends that once were cherished are now forgotten. In fact, the man almost pities himself to think that he should have been so unfortunate to have a friend who has so come down, and he has no pity for his friend, because he is so much occupied in pitying himself. In hundreds, and thousands, and tens of thousands of cases, as soon as the gold has gone, the pretended love has gone, and when the dwelling has been changed from the mansion to the cottage, the friendship which once promised to last for ever, has suddenly disappeared.

But, brethren, God will never leave us on account of poverty: however low we may be brought, there it always stands, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Scant may be your board; you may have hard work to provide things honest in the sight of all men; you may sometimes have to look, and look again, and wonder by what straits you will be enabled to escape out of your present difficulty. But when all friends have turned their backs, and when acquaintances have fallen from you like leaves in autumn, he hath said, "I will never leave, nor forsake thee." Then beneath his bounty you shall find a shelter, and when these other hands are shut his hands shall be outstretched still in lovingkindness and tender mercy, to help and deliver the soul of the needy.

Sometimes, and very often, too, men lose all their friends if they fall into any temporary disgrace. They may really have done no wrong; they may even have done right, but public opinion may condemn the course they took, or slander may be propagated, which casts them into the shade, and

then men suddenly grow forgetful. They do not know the man; how should they? He is not the same man, to them at any rate, and as the world gives him the cold shoulder, his friends serve him the same. The old proverb, "The devil take the hindmost," seems to be generally the custom with our friends when we get into seeming disgrace. They are all off, seeing who can run away first, for they fear that they shall be left to share in our dishonour. But it is never so with our God. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Thou mayest be put into the dungeon, like Paul and Silas, but God will make thee sing there, even at midnight. Thou mayest be set in the stocks, but even there God will cause thee to rejoice greatly. Thou mayest be cast into the fiery furnace, but he will tread the flames with thee there. Thou mayest be so dishonoured that men shall treat thee as they did God's only Son, and lift thee up upon the cross of shame, and put thee to death; but thou shalt never say, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' Thy Lord said it when he bore thy guilt, but thou shalt never need to say it, for thy guilt is put away for ever, and Jehovah will stand by thee in all thy dishonour. And let me here say, that there is never a child in the family that is dearer to the great Father than the child that is suffering shame and contempt from others. He loves them dearest when they suffer reproach for his sake. These are nearer to his heart than any other, and he bids them rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great shall be their reward in heaven if thus they bear and endure for his name. "I will never leave thee, my persecuted one: I will pour such joy into thy heart that thou shalt forget all the dishonour. I will send an angel to minister to thee: yea, I will myself be with thee, and thou shalt rejoice in my salvation, while thy heart is glad and calm in the midst of the tumult and the strife around."

Blessed be God, all the shame and spitting that men can put upon us can never put our God away, for "He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Alas! sad is it for human nature that we must say it — how many have been forsaken when they have been no longer able to minister to the pleasure and comfort of those who admired them while they profited by them? Some are thus thrown aside, just as men throw away household stuff that is worn out, and is of no further use. Depend upon it, men will not forsake us while they can get anything out of us; but when there is no longer anything to profit by, when the poor woman becomes so decrepit that she can scarcely move from her bed to her chair, when the man becomes so laid aside by accident, or is so weak that he cannot take

his place in the great march of life, then he is like the soldiers in Napoleon's march, he drops out of the line to die, and thousands either march over him, or if they are a little more merciful, march by and round him, but few are those who will stop to care for such, and attend to them. How often are the incurable forsaken and left! But he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If we should get so old that we cannot serve the church of God, even by a single word; if we should become so sick that we are only a burden to those of our house who have to nurse us; if we should grow so feeble that we could not lift our hand to our lip, yet the eternal love of Jehovah would not have diminished, no, not so much as by a single jot, towards the souls whom he had loved from before the foundation of the world. However low your condition, you shall find God's love is ever underneath for your uplifting. However weak you are, his strength shall be revealed in the everlasting arms that will not permit you to sink into disaster, and your soul into perdition. This, then, is a very precious text. Others may forsake us, for different reasons, too many to be mentioned now, but he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Well, then, let the rest go. If the Lord Jehovah standeth at our right hand, we can well afford to see the backs of all our friends, for we shall find friends enough in the Triune God, whom we delight to deserve.

Again, this is a very remarkable promise, if we think of our own conduct towards God. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And have not we often said the same to him? We were like Peter: we felt we did love our Saviour: we were sure we did, and we did not, could not believe that we could ever be so false, so faithless, as to forsake him. We almost longed for some temptation to prove how true we should be. We felt very vexed with other professors that they should prove so untrue. We felt in our heart that we could not do like that, and that we should stand firm under any imaginable pressure. But what became of us, my brethren? Charge your memories a moment. Did the cock that accused Peter never accuse you? Did you never deny your Lord and Master, and at last, hearing the warning voice, go out and weep bitterly because you had forgotten, him, him whom you had declared so solemnly you never would forsake? Oh! yes, I fear we, many and many a time, we have said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and yet under some sarcasm, some ridicule, or some pressing trial, we have been like the children of Ephraim, and, though armed and carrying bows, we have turned our back in the day

of battle. If the voice has never denied Christ, has the heart never done so? If the tongue has remained silent, has not the soul sometimes gone back to the old flesh-pots of Egypt, and said, "I would fain find comfort once again where I did find it, with my old companions and in the old ways"? Ah! well, as you think of this, how unkindly and ungenerously you have treated your Lord, let this text stand out in bold relief, "He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Although you have often forgotten him, yet his loving-kindness changes not. Though you have been fickle, he has been firm; though you have sometimes believed him not, yet he has remained faithful, glory be to his name.

Again, this promise is a very remarkable one, if we notice how it overrides all the suggestions that might arise from a mere view of strict and severe justice. It might be said, "Surely a child of God might justly be forsaken: he might so sin against God that it would only be just to leave him utterly to himself." Now, I am free to grant that a child of God might do so, nay, that all the children of God do so, and that God would be just if he acted upon the stern principle of law, to forsake his children as soon as ever they were converted, for it is not long after their conversion that they sin, and that sin is a special kind of treason against God. He would be just, even if he cast them away. But what I desire to enforce is this, that the promise is remarkable because it makes no kind of provision for this in any sort or degree, and under no imaginable circumstances. It does not say, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, if — " as certain brethren are prone to put it — "if — thou dost not forsake me." Nor does it say, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, if thou doest so-and-so and so-and-so." It is an absolute promise without any peradventures, ifs, buts, conditions, or promises. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

He that believeth in Jesus shall never be so left of God as to fall finally from grace. He shall never be so deserted as to give up his God, for his God will never give him up so far as to let him give up his confidence, or his hope, or his love, or his trust. The Lord, even our God, holds us with his strong right hand, and we shall not be moved, and even if we sin — sweet thought! — "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Over the heads of all our sins and iniquities, this promise sounds like a sweet silver bell, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, there are some that would make licentiousness out of this, and go into sin, but in doing so they prove themselves not to be the children of God. They show at once that they know nothing of the matter, for the genuine child of God, when he has a promise which is unconditional, finds holiness in it. Being moved by gratitude, he wants no buts, and ifs, and conditions, and racks, and scourges, in order to do right. He is ruled by love, and not by fear, governed by a holy gratitude which becomes a stronger bond to sacred obedience than any other bond that could be invented. Hence to the child of God, the knowledge that God will not leave nor forsake him, never suggests the thought of plunging into sin; he were an awful monster, indeed, if he did any such thing, but he hates it, and he says: —

“Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of him ere time began,
I choose him in return.”

Observe, then, how remarkable is the promise — so contrary to the manner of men, so contrary to our own conduct, and so absolute and unconditional, that it is, indeed, marvellous that such a word should be on record. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

I cannot leave this part of the subject without remarking that such a promise as this seems to me that it makes a clean sweep of every suggestion to the child of God to be depressed in mind. You tell me you do not feel just now as you did some time ago: you are not anything like to earnest and lively in the divine ways.

When a believer is in this state, it is sometimes suggested to him that doubtless he is not a Christian at all, and that he must go back altogether to Egypt, in order to get gospel liberty, which is foolishness. But this promise comes in, and says to him, “God has not left thee, nor forsaken thee”; whatever may be your present state of thought and feeling, however low you may have fallen, the Eternal God is still faithful: he has not forgotten you. Go to him now: ask for revivings and refreshings, for he will surely give them to you. Conscience will, perhaps, say to some child of God tonight, indeed I hope it will, “There has been much today in business that has not been what it should have been, and as you look back upon the

day you will see much to mourn over,” and then, perhaps, conscience will add, “Therefore, God will leave you.” Now, if you come to believe that, you will live worse tomorrow than he has said, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,’ and can go with childlike confidence to your God, and confess the sin of the day, and begin again, washing once more in the precious fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel’s veins, tomorrow there will be a better day. The joy of the Lord will be your strength against the sin, and your confidence in your Father’s immutable affection will inspire you with zeal to trample down your temptations. Perhaps the devil may be injecting into your soul tonight all sorts of strange things, that God has forsaken you quite, and that he will be gracious no more to you, and other lies of that kind. But he has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” and if you can get hold of this, it will be a sufficient refutation of all the suggestions of your own fear; and of the infernal power. No, Satan! I will cast myself upon the precious blood of Jesus, and if God should take all my property away, yet he has not left me, nor forsaken me. I am sure of that, and if my spirit sinks so low that I dare not look up, yet still he has said he has not left me, and he never will. If my sins should roll over me, like a big billow, and my conscience should cry out against me, and I should feel no rest and no peace, yet still I will hold on to Jesus, sink or swim, for he hath said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” and let God be true, and every man, and every devil, and even my own conscience, prove a liar, sooner than God’s Word should for a moment be placed in doubt. We now pass on to ponder upon: —

II. THE REMARKABLE COMFORT CONTAINED IN THIS PROMISE.

See how it abounds! I note, first its constancy. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” That is, not for a day, not for an hour, not for a minute. There are no breaks in the divine love. God does not depart from his people to return to them by-and-by, but he assures, “I will never, no never, leave thee.” Perhaps that dear child of yours that is sickening is soon to die: well, God will not leave you in the moment when she is taken from you. Possibly that dear one who is now your comfort and delight, your husband, may sicken, and it will be a terrible stroke for you to be

visited with, but “I will never leave thee, not even for an instant, then: in that trying time thou shalt prove the power and solace of my presence.”

Perhaps, business man, that great commercial project, that great transaction, of yours may prove to be a losing one; that bill may be dishonoured; you may come to bankruptcy without any fault on your part, but “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Yes, you may have to go to Australia, and you may greatly dread the leaving your native land, but even then “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” It may be you may be so misrepresented as to become suspected by those whom you love best, and you may be even put out of the church of God, without any fault, but entirely through error. Well, but then, even then, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” not even for a minute. Oh! brethren, what would be the consequences if the Lord left us for one-quarter of an hour? I solemnly believe that, if God were to leave his people even on their knees for one twenty minutes, they would be brought to the deepest hell; but he will not leave them even there. And if it were dangerous to leave them on their knees alone, how much more so in the market, or in business, amidst enemies — seeking to catch them in their speech and deed! But he will never for a moment leave his people, nor forsake them. He will be at all times, at all hours, at all seasons, in all days of emergency, at their right hand, and they shall not be moved.

I notice in the promise, next to constancy, endurance. As there shall be no breaks in God’s love for his own, so there shall be no end to it. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Yes, it may not be desirable to live to extreme old age, when infirmities may abound, and all strength may decay, but if you should reach it, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” It certainly is a painful thing, that last stroke, to pass to the throne of God, but “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” There shall never be a time when the Lord will cast away one of his people. He shall never grow weary of them. He has espoused them unto himself, married them, taken them into eternal union with himself, and never, let the ages revolve as they may, and time change as it will, never will God leave or forsake his people. Comfort yourselves, therefore, with the confidence of the endurance, as well as the constancy of this love.

We are most pleased, however, with the fulness of the promise. The text means, manifestly means from its connection, a great deal more than it

says. We are told not to be covetous. Why? Why should we be covetous? God has said he will never leave us, and if we have him we possess all things. Who has need to be covetous when all things are his, and God is his? We are told to be contented, not to seek to hoard up so much for the future, because God has provided for the future in the very promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” God guarantees to his servants that they shall have enough; well, let that guarantee prevent both covetousness and discontent. How shall this promise apply to temporal things? “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” does not look at first sight as if it had anything to do with our ordinary expenses, but, according to the text, it has, for we are told not to be covetous, but to be content with such things as we have. So, then, the text applies to the ordinary working-man, to the merchant, to every Christian, even in his money matters, as well as in his soul matters. “I will not leave thee, even in these.” He that doth not let a sparrow fall to the ground without his permission will not let his children want. If they should for a little time be in need, that shall work their lasting good, but they shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed. The fulness that lies in the promise is perfectly unbounded. When God says he will be with his servants, he means this, “My wisdom shall be with them to guide them; my love shall be with them to cheer them; my Spirit shall be with them to sanctify them; my power shall be with them to defend them; my everlasting might shall be put forth on their behalf so that they may not fail nor be discouraged.” To have God with you were better than to have an army of ten thousand men, and a host of friends were not equal to that one name, the name of Jehovah, for he is a host in himself. When God is with a man, he is not there asleep, negligent, indifferent, regardless in his time of suffering, but he is there intensely sympathizing, bearing the trouble, helping and sustaining the sufferer, and in due time — his own good time — delivering him in triumph. Oh! precious word of heartening promise! Plunge ye into it, for it is a sea without a bottom, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Better still, perhaps, in the promise is the certain truth of it. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” has been proved by God’s saints in all the ages that are past. Turn to the pages of your Bibles, and see if ever a man was ashamed that put his trust in Christ: see if he that wrestled with the invisible God was ever confounded. Hath not the Lord kept with his people at all hazards — broken the necks of kings, and scattered empires

like chaff before the wind, sooner than that one of his faithful ones should come to ruin?

It has been so, even in your own experience. You, too, have found the text to be true. You have gone through fire and through water, but he has never left you nor forsaken you. Your vessel scarcely had enough draught of water to keep off the bottom, but through she has almost grated on the gravel, yet she has kept afloat, and though, perhaps, you have been wrecked, yet you have come safe to shore. You have lost much, you say, but you have been a gainer by your loss, and where you are today you are by eternal mercy and covenant grace, and you could not well be in a better position than God has put you in. Goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life up till now, and you are obliged to confess it, and to say: —

“Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.”

So fear not now that at this particular season God is about to alter his previous dispensation. Out with them, poor Little-Faith; away with thy doubts; put away those black suspicions. He is a God that changeth not, and, having helped you until now, he will help you even to the end. Why, how true this must be! “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” How can God forsake that which has cost him so much already? He has given his Son’s blood to redeem us, and his Spirit’s power to renew us, and if he were to leave undone the work which he has begun, why, a tower has been commenced, and he has not been able to finish it! A man who has spent much money upon one enterprise will spend yet more to finish it, because of what he has already spent. Now, God will not lose the work of Christ, and the precious blood of his Son, but, having begun, he will certainly carry on, even to the end. Besides this, also: God cannot leave his people, because he calls them his children, and how could he leave his child? “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” Even when the son has dishonoured his father’s name, and lost his own character, that father’s love still holds on, and follows that child still with tears of sorrow, but still with faithfulness and truth. And God will not cast away his own begotten sons, whom he has begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Beloved, Christ is

married to his people, and therefore how can he leave them? He says, “As a young man rejoiceth over his bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee,” and will he leave them to whom he is knit by so near and dear, so tender and affectionate a union? It cannot be. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Now, see, if he did leave his people, what would it be? It would be giving up the whole quarrel between himself and Satan. It is in his people’s hearts that the great battle is being fought out between good and evil. To give them up would be to give up the battle ground to his great enemy, and what laughter there would be in the vaults of hell, what mockery in the halls of Pandemonium, if it could be said, “God has forsaken his people, given up his elect, suffered his redeemed to perish, cast away his regenerate, and forsaken the souls that trusted him”! The very thought of it is blasphemy. Far, far from us let us put it away. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

I cannot enlarge further upon the promise, and need not do so, because it opens up itself, or rather God the Holy Ghost will open it up to you if you sit awhile in your chamber and meditate upon it. I do not know of a richer text, or one more full of consolation. It is a long skein of truth; unwind it. It is a precious granary, full as Joseph crammed the granaries of Egypt; open you the door, and feed to the full; there will be no fear of your ever exhausting it. “For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Now, the third thing to be noticed concerning this promise is: —

III. THE REMARKABLE EFFECTS THAT SUCH A PROMISE SHOULD PRODUCE.

Surely the first blessed fruit of such a glorious promise should be perfect contentment. It is said to be hard to be contented. I have the pleasure of knowing some brethren who I am sure are perfectly content. They even say, and I think without the slightest mental reservation, that they have not an unfulfilled wish or desire so far as this world goes. They have all that heart could wish. And yet these are not the richest people in the world, and they are not persons who are much to be envied for their mere external circumstances: yet they are perfectly contented. The fact is that the grace of God makes the people of God to sing sweetly, where other people would murmur. They are satisfied where others would find easy

ground for discontent. But how easy it is, how easy it must be, for a man to be contented when he knows that God has promised to be with him in all circumstances and at all times! Surely, if anything could be a kind of conservatory, a hot-house, in which to grow the delicate plant of contentment to perfection, it must be this full belief that high or low, rich or poor, well or sick, God hath said, "I will never leave, nor forsake thee." Surely it was this that made Bunyan's Pilgrim sing in the Valley of Humiliation: —

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

Christian did thereby say that he was content, whether he had little or much, and that he left everything in his lot to his God. Oh! get then, my friends, my text fully into your souls, and keep it there, as marrow and fatness, and you will be content.

Well, then, in the next place, it will cure your covetousness. A man does not need to go on scraping, and to use that muck-rake forever, when he knows "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It was not a bad argument which one used with Alexander when he said to him, "When are you going to enjoy yourself fully?" Alexander did not answer the question, but the philosopher said, "What are you going to do next?" "First, we shall conquer Greece." "Yes, and then will you rest?" "No; we shall then attack Asia Minor." "And when you have conquered that, I suppose you will rest?" "No; we shall then take Persia." "And when you have overcome Persia, what then?" "We shall march to India." "And when you have taken India, what then?" "Why, then we shall sit down and make ourselves merry." "Well," said the philosopher, "I think we had better begin before we go to Greece, or Persia, or Asia Minor, or any of them." And truly so, it were as well for us to be content with that moderate income which God gives us. Let us enjoy what God bestows upon us now, in gratitude to him, and give ourselves up to his service; lest, perhaps, in seeking more, we become spiritually poorer while literally richer, and become less content with the great load on our back than we are today, when we have enough and no more. It is a sweet quietus to covetousness when God saith, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

And, beloved, what a promise this is to make a man confident in his God. In his works, in his sufferings, in his enterprises, what a stay of soul is here!

I know what it is to fall back upon this promise sometimes to keep from depression of spirit, and to find reviving in it. Perhaps you may suppose that those of us who are always before the public, and are speaking concerning the blessed promises of God, never have any moments of downcasting, and never any times of heartbreaking; but you are quite mistaken. We may have passed through all this, perhaps, that we may know how to say a word in season to any who are now passing through similar experiences. With many enterprises upon my hands, far too great for my own unaided strength, I am often driven to fall flat upon the promise of my God, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If I feel that any scheme has been of my own devising, and that I seek my own honour in it, I know it must come to the ground, and rightly so. But when I can prove that God has thrust it upon me, and that I am moved by a divine impulse, and not by my own monitions and wishings, then how can my God forsake me? How can he lie, however weak I may be? How is it possible for him to send his servant out to battle, and not succour him with reinforcements in the day when the battle goes hard? God is not David when he put Uriah in the front, and then left him that he might die. He will never put any of his servants forward and then desert them. Dear brethren and sisters, if the Lord shall call some of you even to things you cannot do, he will give you strength enough to do them; and if he should push you still forwarder till your difficulties increase and your burdens become heavy, still, as your days, your strength shall be, and you shall go on with the tramp of soldiers, with the indomitable spirit of men who have tried and trusted the naked arm of the Eternal God. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Then what matters it? Though all the world were against you, you could shake all the world as Samson shook the lion, and rent him as a kid. If God be for you, who can be against you? Though earth, and hell, and all their crew, come against you, and should combine together, yet if the God of Jacob stood at your back, you would thresh them as though they were but wheat, and winnow them as though they were but chaff, and the wind should carry them away. Oh! roll this promise under your tongue as a sweet morsel!

How I wish that it belonged to you all! Oh! that everyone of you had a share in it! But some of you, alas! have never fled to Jesus. Oh! that you would do so! Whoever trusts him to pardon by his atoning sacrifice, is saved. To look to the great Substitute, and depend upon him for that salvation, this gives salvation, and then come the promises that belong to the saved.

The Lord of his infinite mercy bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

A Sermon

Published on Thursday, February 5th, 1914.

Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Lord's Day Evening, April 28th, 1867.

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

— Romans 5:1

We desire this evening not to preach upon this text as a mere matter of doctrine. You all believe and understand the gospel of justification by faith, but we want to preach upon it tonight as a matter of experience, as a thing realized, felt, enjoyed, and understood in the soul. I trust there are many here who not only know that men may be saved and justified by faith, but who can say in their own experience, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and who are now at the present moment walking and living in the actual enjoyment of that peace.

Wishing to speak of the text, then, in this sense, I shall ask you to accompany me, not only with your ears, and with the attention which you usually give so generously, but also with the eye of your self-examination, asking yourselves, as we proceed step by step, “Do I know that? Have I received that? Have I been taught of God in this matter? Have I been led into that truth?” And our hope will be that some person to whom these things have hitherto been merely external, and therefore valueless, may be

led by God to get hold of them, so that they may be matters of soul, and heart, and conscience, so that they may enjoy them, and find themselves where once they feared they would never be, namely, in a state of reconciliation with God, happily enjoying peace with the Most High.

Our first few thoughts shall be some plain, earnest talk concerning: —

I. A FEW PRELIMINARY DISCOVERIES WHICH A MAN MAKES BEFORE HE GETS PEACE WITH GOD.

These, I do not think, are by any means foreign to the text, or merely imported to it, but belong rightfully to it. You see that Paul, before he came to this justification by faith, had been speaking about sin. It would not have been possible for him to have given an intelligible definition of justification without mentioning that men are sinners, without informing them that they had broken God's holy law, and that the law, by and of itself, could never restore them to the favour of God. Now, some of these things of which I am going to speak are absolutely necessary, if not to my sermon, yet certainly to your spiritually understanding even so much as one jot or tittle of what it is to be justified by faith.

Well, then, what are these things? The first discovery that a man is led by the Spirit of God to make before he is justified is, that it is important to be justified in the sight of God. Many people do not know this. You shall step into a shop this evening, and find a man at the counter, and you say to him, "Well, do you never go to a place of worship?" "No," he would say, "but I am quite as good as those who do." "How so?" "Well, I am a great deal better than some of them." "How is that?" "Well, I never failed in business; I never duped people in a limited liability company; I never told lies; I am no thief; I am not a drunkard; I am as honest as the days are long in the middle of June; and that is more than you can say of some of your religious people." Now, that man has got a hold of one part of a good man's character. There are two parts, but he can only see one, namely, that man is to be just to man. He sees that, but he does not see that man is to be also just to God. And yet if that man were really to think a little while, he would see that the highest obligations of a creature must be, not to his fellow-creatures, but to his Creator, and that, however just a man may be to another man, yet if he be altogether unjust to God, he cannot escape without the severest penalty. But oh! the most of men think that so long

as they keep the laws of the land, so long as they give to their fellow-men their due, it matters not though God's day should be a subject of scorn, God's will be used as men will, and God's law trodden under their feet. Now, I think that everyone here who will but put his fingers to his brow for a moment and think, that he will see that, even though a man may go before the bar of his country, and say before any judge or jury, "I have in nothing injured my fellow-man; I am just before men," yet it does not make the man's character perfect. Unless he is also able to say, "And I am also just before the presence of the God who made me, and whose servant I am," he has only kept one half, and that the less important, of God's law for him.

It cannot help being, it must be, important to the highest degree that you and I should stand on good terms with the great God unto whom we shall so soon return in the great day when he shall say, "Return ye children of men." We must then render up our souls to him who created us. Well, you can surely go as far as that with me — that it is necessary. You do feel, do you not, a desire in your heart to be just before your Maker? I am thankful that you can go so far.

The next thing is this. A man, when the Spirit of God is bringing him to Christ, discovers that his past life has been marred badly, by serious offences against the law of God. Before the Spirit of God comes into our soul, we are like being in a room in the dark: we cannot see in it. We cannot discover the cobwebs, the spiders, the foul and loathsome things that may be lurking there. But when the Spirit of God comes streaming into the soul, the man is astonished to find that he is what he is, and especially if he sits down and opens the book of the law, and, in the light of the divine Spirit, reads that perfect law, and compares with it his own imperfect heart and life. He will then grow sick of himself, even to loathing and, sometimes, despair. Take but one command. Perhaps there are some here who will say, "I know I have been very chaste all my life, for the command saith, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' and I have never broken it; I am clean there." Ay, but now hear Christ explain the command, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Now, then, who amongst us can say that we have not done that? Who is there upon earth, if that be the meaning of the command, who can say, "I am innocent?" If the law of God, as we are told by Scripture,

has to deal, not with our outward actions alone, but with our words, and with our thoughts, and with our imaginations — if it is so exceeding broad that it applies to the most secret part of a man, then who of us can plead guiltless before the throne? No, dear brethren, this must be understood by you, and by me, before we can be justified, that we are full of sin. What if I say that we are as full of sin as an egg is full of meat? We are all sin. The imagination and the thought of our heart is evil, and only evil, and that continually. If some of you plume yourselves with the notion that you are righteous, I pray God to pluck those fine feathers off you and make you see yourselves, for if you never see your own nothingness, you will never understand Christ's all-sufficiency. Unless you are pulled down, Christ will never lift you up. Unless you know yourselves to be lost, you will never care for that Saviour who came "to seek and to save the lost." That is a second discovery, then; that it is important to be just before God, but that on account of the spirituality of God's moral law, and our consequent inability to keep it perfectly, we are very far from standing in that position.

Then there comes another discovery, namely, that consequently it is utterly impossible for us to hope that we ever can be just before God, on the footing of our own doing. We must give it up now, as an utterly lost case. The past is past: that can never be by us blotted out, and the present, inasmuch as we are weak through the flesh, is not much better than the past; and the future, notwithstanding all our fond hopes of improvement, will probably be none the better, and so salvation by the works of the law becomes to us a dreary impossibility. The law said, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." I was conversing on one occasion with one of our most illustrious Jewish noblemen, and when I put to him the question — he believed himself to be perfectly righteous, and I believe if any man could be so by his moral conduct, he might have fairly laid claim to it; but when I said to him, "Now, there is your own law for it, 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them': have you continued in all things?" he said, "I have not." "Then," I said, "the curse is upon you: how do you hope to escape from it?" and I found that to be a question for which he, at any rate, had no answer; and it is a question which, when properly understood, no man can answer, except by pointing to the cross of Christ and saying, "He was made a curse for us that we

might be made a blessing.” Unless you and I keep the law of God perfectly, it matters little how near we get to perfection. It is as though God had committed to our trust a perfect crystal vase, and had said, “If you keep that whole, and present it to me, you shall have a reward.” But we have cracked it, chipped it; ah! my brethren, the most of us have broken it and smashed it to pieces. But we will suppose that we have only cracked it a little. Yes, but even then we have lost the reward, for the condition was that it should be perfectly whole, and the slightest chip is a violation of the condition upon which the reward would have been given. Never you say that you will not break it farther. Nay, but you have broken it. You have thrown yourselves now out of the list. It sometimes seems hard when you tell people that if they have violated the law in one point, they have broken the whole of it; but it is not so hard as it looks to be, for if I tell a man who is going down a coal- mine on a long chain that, if he shall break one link of the chain, it does not matter, though all the other hundreds or thousands of links may be sound; if there is only one link that is broken, down will descend the basket, and the poor miner be dashed to pieces. Nobody thinks that hard. Everybody recognizes that as being a matter of mechanical law, that the strength of a chain must be measured by its weakest part. And so the strength of our obedience must be gauged by the very point in which it fails. Alas! our obedience has failed, and, through it, no one of us can ever be just before God.

Now, I want to stop a minute, and put the question round the galleries, and below stairs. Have you all got as far as that? It is important to be just before God: we see that we are not so: do we see that we cannot be so? Are we quite convinced that by our own obedience to the law of God, it is hopeless for us to think of standing accepted before the Most High? I pray the Eternal Spirit to convince you all of this, or you will keep on knocking at the door until you are quite sure that God has nailed it up for ever, and you will go scrambling over that Alp, and tumbling down this precipice, until you are convinced that it is impossible for you to climb it, and then you will give up your desperate endeavour and come to God in God’s way, which is quite another way from your own. I trust that we are all convinced of this.

Let us notice one more preliminary discovery. A man, having found out all this, suddenly discovers that, inasmuch as he is not just before God, and

cannot be, he is at the present moment under condemnation. God is never indifferent towards sin. If, therefore, a man be not in a state in which God can justify him, he is in a state in which God must condemn him. If you are not just before God, you are condemned at this very moment. You are not executed, it is true, but the condemnation has gone forth against you, and the sign that it is so is your unbelief, for “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” How some of you would spring up from your seats tonight if all on a sudden you got the information that you had been condemned by the courts of your country; but when I say that you have been condemned by the Court of Heaven, this glides across your conscience like drops of water or oil over a marble slab. And yet, my hearers, if thou didst but know the meaning of what I am saying — and I pray God the Holy Ghost to make thee know it — it would make thy very bones to quiver! God has condemned thee. Thou art out of Christ. Thou hast broken his law. God has lifted his hand to smite thee, and, though his mercy tarries for awhile, yet days and hours will soon be gone, and then the condemnation shall take the shape of execution, and where will thy soul be then? Now, you must have the sentence of condemnation passed in your own soul, or else you will never be justified, for until we are condemned by ourselves we are not acquitted by God. Again, I pause and say, Dost thou feel this, my dear hearer? If thou dost, instead of despairing, be hopeful. If thou hast the sentence of death within thee, be thankful for it, for now shall life be given thee from the hand of God’s grace.

Having occupied, perhaps, too much time over that, we now come more immediately into the text to: —

II. SHOW THE GOSPEL LEARNING WHICH IS TAUGHT TO US BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

That gospel learning I may give you in a few sentences, namely, these: that, inasmuch as through man’s sin, the way of obedience is for ever closed, so that we — none of us — can ever pass by it to a true righteousness, God has now determined to deal with men in a way of mercy, to forgive them all their offences, to bestow upon them his love, to receive them graciously, and to love them freely. He has been pleased, in his infinite wisdom, to devise a way by which without injury to his justice, he can yet receive the most undeserving sons of men into his heart,

and make them his children, and can bless them with all the blessings which would have been theirs had they perfectly kept God's law, but which now shall come to them as a matter of gift and undeserved grace from himself.

I trust we have learned that; that there is a plan of salvation by grace, and by grace alone; and it is a great thing to know that where grace is, there are no works.

It is a blessed thing never to muddle in your head the doctrine of working, and the doctrine of receiving by grace, for there is an essential and eternal difference between the two. I hope you all know that there can be no mixing of the two. If we are saved by grace, it cannot be by our own merits, but if we depend upon our own merits, then we cannot appeal to the grace of God, since the two things can never be mingled together. It must be all works or else all grace. Now, God's plan of salvation excludes all our works. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." It comes to us upon the footing of grace, pure grace alone. And this is God's plan, namely, that, inasmuch as we cannot be saved by our own obedience, we should be saved by Christ's obedience. Jesus, the Son of God, has appeared in the flesh, has lived a life of obedience to God's law, and in consequence of that obedience, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and our Saviour's life and death make up a complete keeping and honouring of that law which we have broken and dishonoured, and God's plan is this: "I cannot bless you for your own sakes, but I will bless you for his sake; and now, looking at you through him, I can bless you though you deserve it not; I can pass by your undeserving; I can blot out your sins like a cloud, and cast your iniquities into the depths of the sea through what he has done; you have no merits, but he has boundless merits; you are full of sin and must be punished, but he has been punished instead of you, and now I can deal with you." This is the language of God, put into human words, "I can deal with you upon terms of mercy through the merits of my dear Son." This is the way in which the gospel comes to you, then. If you believe in Jesus, that is to say, if you trust him, all the merits of Jesus are your merits, are imputed to you: all the sufferings of Jesus are your sufferings. Everyone of his merits is imputed to you. You stand before God as if you were Christ, because Christ stood before God as if he

were you — he in your stead, you in his stead. Substitution! that is the word! Christ the Substitute for sinners: Christ standing for men, and bearing the thunderbolts of the divine opposition to all sin, he “being made sin for us who knew no sin.” Man standing in Christ’s place, and receiving the sunlight of divine favour, instead of Christ.

And this, I say, is through trusting, or believing. God’s way of your getting connection with Christ is through your reliance upon him.

“Therefore, being justified” — how? Not by works; that is not the link, but — “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ offers to God the substitution: through faith we accept it: and from that moment God accepts us.

Now, I want to come to this, dear friends. Do you know this? Have you been taught this by the Spirit of God? Perhaps you learned it in the Assembly’s Catechism when you were but children: you have learned it in the various classes since then, but do you know it in your own soul, and do you know that God’s way of salvation is through a simple dependence upon his dear Son? Do you so know it that you have accepted it, and that you are now resting upon Jesus? If so, then thrice happy are you!

But, going further, I have now to dwell for a minute or two upon: —

III. THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE OF THE TEXT.

We have led you, and I hope the Spirit of God has led you, too, through the preliminary discoveries, and through the great discovery that God can save us through the merits of another, and now let us notice this glorious privilege word by word.

“Being justified.” The text tells us that every believing man is at the present moment perfectly justified before God. You know what Adam was in naked innocence in Paradise. Such is every believer. Ay, and more than that. Adam could talk with God because he was pure from sin, and we also have access with boldness unto God our Father because, through Jesus’ blood, we are clean. Now, I do not say that this is the privilege of a few eminent saints, but here I look around these pews and see my brethren and sisters — scores and hundreds of them — all of whom are tonight just before God — perfectly so; completely so; so just that they never can be otherwise than just; so just that even in heaven they will be no more

acceptable to God than they are here tonight. That is the state into which faith brings a poor, lost, guilty, helpless, good-for- nothing sinner. The man may have been everything that was bad before he believed in Jesus, but as soon as he trusted Christ, the merits of Christ became his merits, and he stands before God as though he were perfect, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” through the righteousness of Christ.

Note, however, as we have noticed the state of justification, the means whereby we reach it. “Being justified by faith.” The way of reaching this state of justification is not by tears, nor prayers, nor humblings, nor working, nor Bible-reading, nor church-going, nor chapel- going, nor sacraments, nor priestly absolution, but by faith, which faith is a simple and utter dependence and believing in the faithfulness of God, a dependence upon the promise of God, because it is God’s promise, and is worthy of dependence. It is a reliance with all our might upon what God has said. This is faith, and every man who possesses this faith is perfectly justified tonight.

I know what the devil will say to you. He will say to you, “You are a sinner!” Tell him you know you are, but that for all that you are justified. He will tell you of the greatness of your sin. Tell him of the greatness of Christ’s righteousness. He will tell you of all your mishaps and your backslidings, of your offences and your wanderings. Tell him, and tell your own conscience, that you know all that, but that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that, although your sin be great, Christ is quite able to put it all away. Some of you, it seems to me, do not trust in Christ as sinners. You get a mingle-mangle kind of faith. You trust in Christ as though you thought Christ could do something for you, and you could do the rest. I tell you that while you look to yourselves, you do not know what faith means. You must be convinced that there is nothing good in yourselves; you must know that you are sinners, and that in your hearts you are as big and as black sinners as the very worst and vilest, and you must come to Jesus, and leave your fancied righteousnesses, and your pretended goodnesses behind you, and you must take him for everything, and trust in him. Oh! to feel your sin, and yet to know your righteousness — to have the two together — repentance on account of sin, and yet a glorious confidence in the all-atoning sacrifice! Oh! if you could understand that saying of the spouse, “I am black, but comely” — for that is where we

must come — black in myself, as black as hell, and yet comely, fair, lovely, inexpressibly glorious through the righteousness of Jesus.

My dear brethren and sisters, can you feel this? If you cannot feel it, do you believe it? And do you sing in the words of Joseph Hart?: —

“In thy surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With thy Saviour’s vesture on,
Holy as the holy one.”

For so it is: you stand before God as accepted as Christ is accepted: and notwithstanding the inbred sin and corruption of your heart, you are as dear to God as Christ is dear, and as accepted in the righteousness of Christ as Christ is accepted in his own obedience.

Have we got so far? That is the point on which I want to enquire this evening. Have you got as far as to know at this moment that it is through faith we are justified? If so, I shall conduct you just one step farther, namely, to observe — and this is coming back, whilst it is also going forward — that “we are justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is the foundation: there is the mainspring. There is the tree that bears the fruit. We are justified by faith, but not by faith of itself. Faith in itself is a precious grace, but it cannot in itself justify us. It is “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Simple as the observation is, I must venture to repeat it tonight, because it is hard for us to keep it in mind. But remember that faith is not the work of the Spirit within, but the work of Christ upon the tree. That upon which I must rest as my meritorious hope is not the blessed fact that I am now an heir of heaven, but the still more blessed fact that the Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me. My dear brethren, when all is fair weather within, there is such a temptation to say, “Well, now, it is all right with me, for I fee this, and I feel that.” Very good these evidences are in their places, but evidences, you get equally clear evidences that you are not perfect; when you have to say, “Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” you will find that, instead of your beautiful evidences, you will have to fly to the cross. There was a time when I, too, could take a great deal of comfort in what I believe is the Spirit of God’s work in my soul I do thank God for it, and

bless him for it now but I trust I have learned to walk where poor Jack the huckster walked: —

“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”

Brethren, it is down on the ground that we must live. We must build upon the rock itself. On the top of some mountains men sometimes build heaps of timber, so as to get a little higher. Well, now, some of these rickety platforms, you know, get shaky, but when you get right down on the mountain itself, that never shakes, and you are perfectly secure there. So sometimes we get building up our rickety platforms of our experience and our good works — all very well in their way, but then they shake in the storm. Depend upon it, that the soul that clings to the rock, notwithstanding all that the Holy Spirit has done for it, and having nothing then to depend upon, more than the poor dying robber had when, without a single good work, he had to hang on the dying Christ alone — oh! believe me, that soul is in the safest place to live in, Jesus, for a poor sinner when he is torn from his cups and his sins, and none but Jesus for the aged saint when he stays himself upon his bed to bear his last testimony: —

“Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And now, to crown all, there is here the precious, precious privilege which such men enjoy — “we have peace with God.” I know that this may seem a trifle to thoughtless people, but not to those who think. I cannot say that I sympathize with those people who shut their eyes to the beauties of nature. I have heard of good men travelling through fine scenery, and shutting their eyes for fear they should see. I always open mine as wide as ever I can, because I think I can see God in all the works of his hands, and what God has taken the trouble to make I think I ought to take the trouble to look at. Surely there must be something to see in a man’s works if he be a wise man; and there must be something worth seeing in the works of God, who is all-wise. Now, it is a delightful thing to say, when you look upon a landscape, lit up with sunlight and shaded with cloud, “Well, my Father made all this; I never saw him, but I do delight in the work of his

hands; he made all this, and I am perfectly at peace with him.” Then as you are standing there, a storm comes on. Big drops begin to fall. There is thunder in the distance. It begins to peal louder and louder. Presently there comes a lightning’s flash. Now, those who are not at peace with God may go and flee away, but those who are perfectly at peace with him may stand there and say, “Well, it is my Father who is doing all this; that is his voice; the voice of the Lord, which is full of majesty.” I love to hear my Father’s voice. I never am so happy as in a tremendous storm, and when the lightning flash comes, I think — Well, it is only the flashing of my Father’s eye: now, God is abroad: he seemed as if he had left the world before, but now he comes riding on the wings of the wind; let me go and meet him. I am not afraid! Suppose you are out at sea in a storm. You are justified by faith, and you say, “Well, let the waves roar; let them clap their hands: my Father holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, why should I be afraid?” Let me say to you that it is worth something to believe that God can put us in a calm state of mind when “earth is all in arms abroad.” It is just so with the believer when temporal troubles come. There comes crash after crash until it seems as though every house of business would come down. Nothing is certain. Man has lost confidence and reliance in his fellow-man. Everything is going to the bad. But the Christian says, “God is at the helm; the whole business of business is managed by the great King: let the sons of earth do as they will, but: —

“He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might.”

It is something to feel that my Father cannot do me a bad turn. Even if he should use his rod upon me, it will do me good, and I will thank him for it, for I am at perfect peace with him.

And then to come to die, and to feel, “I am going to God, and I am glad to go, for I am not going like a prisoner to a judge, but like a wife espoused goes to her husband, like a child home from school to the parents’ arms. Oh! it is something to die with a sense of peace with God! Surely every thoughtful man will feel that. Now, if you trust Christ, you shall be justified by faith. Being justified, your heart shall feel that perfect peace is brought into it, so that you shall meet your Father’s will with perfect equanimity, let it be what it may. Come life, come death, it shall not matter to you, for all is right between God and your souls.

Oh! I wish it were so with all present! It may be so if God the Spirit bring you to rest in Jesus. Nay, it shall be so, my dear friend; it shall be so with you tonight; though you never thought it would be when you came in here, yet you see it all now. It is simply believing, simply trusting. Oh! believe him! Trust him, and it shall be the joy of your soul to have a peace with God which, as the world did not give you, so the world shall never take away, but you shall have it for ever and ever. God grant it to each one of us! Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

AN UNALTERABLE LAW

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

— Hebrews 9:22

Everywhere under the old figurative dispensation, blood was sure to greet your eyes. It was the one most prominent thing under the Jewish economy, scarcely a ceremony was observed without it. You could not enter into any part of the tabernacle, but you saw traces of the blood-sprinkling. Sometimes there were bowls of blood cast at the foot of the altar. The place looked so like a shambles, that to visit it must have been far from attractive to the natural taste, and to delight in it, a man had need of a spiritual understanding and a lively faith. The slaughter of animals was the manner of worship; the effusion of blood was the appointed rite, and the diffusion of that blood on the floor, on the curtains, and on the vestments of the priests, was the constant memorial. When Paul says that almost all things were, under the law, purged with blood, he alludes to a few things that were exempted. Thus you will find in several passages the people were exhorted to wash their clothes, and certain persons who had been unclean from physical causes were bidden to wash their clothes with water. Garments worn by men were usually cleansed with water. After the defeat of the Midianites, of which you read in the book of Numbers, the spoil, which had been polluted, had to be purified

before it was claimed by the victorious Israelites. According to the ordinance of the law, which the Lord commanded Moses, some of the goods, such as raiment and articles made of skins or goat's hair, were purified with water, while other things that were of metal that could abide the fire, were purified by fire. Still, the apostle refers to a literal fact, when he says that almost all things, garments being the only exception, were purged, under the law, with blood. Then he refers to it as a general truth, under the old legal dispensation, that there was never any pardoning of sin, except by blood. In one case only was there an apparent exception, and even that goes to prove the universality of the rule, because the reason for the exception is so fully given. The trespass offering, referred to as an alternative, in Leviticus 5:11, might, in extreme cases of excessive poverty, be a bloodless offering. If a man was too poor to bring an offering from the flock, he was to bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons; but if he was too poor even for that, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering, without oil or frankincense, and it was cast upon the fire. That is the one solitary exception through all the types. In every place, at every time, in every instance where sin had to be removed, blood must flow, life must be given. The one exception we have noticed gives emphasis to the statute that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Under the gospel there is no exception, not such an isolated one as there was under the law; no, not even for the extremely poor. Such we all are spiritually. Since we have not any of us to bring an offering, any more than an offering to bring; but we have all of us to take the offering which has already been presented, and to accept the sacrifice which Christ has, of himself, made in our stead; there is now no cause or ground for exemption to any man or woman born, nor ever shall there be, either in this world or in that which is to come, — "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." With great simplicity, then, as it concerns our salvation, may I ask the attention of each one here present, to this great matter which intimately concerns our everlasting interests? I gather from the text, first of all, the encouraging fact that: —

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REMISSION — that is to say, the remission of sins. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Blood has been shed, and there is, therefore, hope concerning such a thing. Remission, notwithstanding the stern requirements of the law, is not to be abandoned in sheer despair. The word remission means the putting away

of debts. Just as sin may be regarded as a debt incurred to God, so that debt may be blotted out, cancelled, and obliterated. The sinner, God's debtor, may cease to be in debt by compensation, by full acquittance, and may be set free by virtue of such remission. Such a thing is possible. Glory be to God, the remission of all sin, of which it is possible to repent, is possible to be obtained. Whatever the transgression of any man may be, pardon is possible to him if repentance be possible to him. Unrepented sin is unforgivable sin. If he confess his sin and forsake it, then shall he find mercy. God hath so declared it, and he will not be unfaithful to his word. "But is there not," saith one, "a sin which is unto death?" Yea, verily, though I know not what it is; nor do we think that any who have enquired into the subject have been able to discover what that sin is; this much seems clear, that practically the sin is unforgivable because it is never repented of. The man who commits it becomes, to all intents and purposes, dead in sin in a more deep and lasting sense even than the human race is as a whole, and he is given up case-hardened — his conscience seared, as it were, with a hot iron, and henceforth he will seek no mercy. But all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. For lust, for robbery, for adultery — yea, for murder, there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

And this forgiveness which is possible is, according to the Scriptures, complete; that is to say, when God forgives a man his sin, he does it outright. He blots out the debt without any back reckoning. He does not put away a part of the man's sin, and have him accountable for the rest; but in the moment in which a sin is forgiven, his iniquity is as though it had never been committed; he is received in the Father's house and embraced with the Father's love as if he had never erred; he is made to stand before God as accepted, and in the same condition as though he had never transgressed. Blessed be God, believer, there is no sin in God's Book against thee. If thou hast believed, thou art forgiven — forgiven not partially, but altogether. The handwriting that was against thee is blotted out, nailed to the cross of Christ, and can never be pleaded against thee any more for ever. The pardon is complete.

Moreover, this is a present pardon. It is an imagination of some (very derogatory to the gospel) that you cannot get pardon till you come to die,

and, perhaps, then in some mysterious way, in the last few minutes, you may be absolved; but we preach to you, in the name of Jesus, immediate and present pardon for all transgressions — a pardon given in an instant — the moment that a sinner believes in Jesus; not as though a disease were healed gradually and required months and long years of progress. True, the corruption of our nature is such a disease, and the sin that dwelleth in us must be daily and hourly mortified; but as for the guilt of our transgressions before God, and the debt incurred to his justice, the remission thereof is not a thing of progress and degree. The pardon of a sinner is granted at once; it will be given to any of you tonight who accept it — yea, and given you in such a way that you shall never lose it. Once forgiven, you shall be forgiven for ever, and none of the consequences of sin shall be visited upon you. You shall be absolved unreservedly and eternally, so that when the heavens are on a blaze, and the great white throne is set up, and the last great assize is held, you may stand boldly before the judgment-seat and fear no accusation, for the forgiveness which God himself vouchsafes he will never revoke.

I will add to this one other remark. The man who gets this pardon may know he has it. Did he merely hope he had it, that hope might often struggle with fear. Did he merely trust he had it, many a qualm might startle him; but to know that he has it is a sure ground of peace to the heart. Glory be to God, the privileges of the covenant of grace are not only matters of hope and surmise, but they are matters of faith, conviction, and assurance. Count it not presumption for a man to believe God's Word. God's own Word it is that says, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ is not condemned." If I believe in Jesus Christ, then I am not condemned. What right have I to think I am? If God says I am not, it would be presumption on my part to think I am condemned. It cannot be presumption to take God's Word just as he gives it to me. "Oh!" saith one, "how happy should I be if this might be my case." Thou hast well spoken, for blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity. "But," saith another, "I should hardly think such a great thing could be possible to such an one as I am." Thou reasonest after the manner of the sons of men. Know then that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts. It is yours to err; it is God's to forgive. You err like a man, but

God does not pardon like a man; he pardons like a God, so that we burst forth with wonder, and sing, “Who is a God like unto thee, that passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin?” When you make anything, it is some little work suitable to your abilities, but our God made the heavens. When you forgive, it is some forgiveness suitable to your nature and circumstances; but when he forgives, he displays the riches of his grace on a grander scale than your finite mind can comprehend. Ten thousand sins of blackest dye, sins of a hellish hue he doth in a moment put away, for he delighteth in mercy; and judgment is his strange work. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live.” This is a joyful note with which my text furnishes me. There is no remission, except with blood; but there is remission, for the blood has been shed.

Coming more closely to the text, we have now to insist on its great lesson, that: —

II. THOUGH THERE BE PARDON OF SIN, IT IS NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD. That is a sweeping sentence, for there are some in this world that are trusting for the pardon of sin to their repentance. It, beyond question, is your duty to repent of your sin. If you have disobeyed God, you should be sorry for it. To cease from sin is but the duty of the creature, else sin is not the violation of God’s holy law. But be it known unto you, that all the repentance in the world cannot blot out the smallest sin. If you had only one sinful thought cross your mind, and you should grieve over that all the days of your life, yet the stain of that sin could not be removed even by the anguish it cost you. Where repentance is the work of the Spirit of God, it is a very precious gift, and is a sign of grace; but there is no atoning power in repentance. In a sea full of penitential tears, there is not the power or the virtue to wash out one spot of this hideous uncleanness. Without the blood-shedding, there is no remission. But others suppose that, at any rate, active reformation growing out of repentance may achieve the task. What if drunkenness be given up, and temperance become the rule? What if licentiousness be abandoned, and chastity adorn the character? What if dishonest dealing be relinquished, and integrity be scrupulously maintained in every action? I say, ‘tis well; I would to God such reformations took place everywhere — yet for all that, debts already incurred are not paid by our not getting into debt further, and past

delinquencies are not condoned by future good behaviour. So sin is not remitted by reformation. Though you should suddenly become immaculate as angels (not that such a thing is possible to you, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots), your reformations could make no atonement to God for the sins that are past in the days that you have transgressed against him. "What then," saith the man, "shall I do?" There are those who think that now their prayers and their umblings of soul may, perhaps, effect something for them. Your prayers, if they be sincere, I would not stay; rather do I hope they may be such prayers as betoken spiritual life. But oh! dear hearer, there is no efficacy in prayer to blot out sin. I will put it strongly. All the prayers of all the saints on earth, and, if the saints in heaven could all join, all their prayers could not blot out through their own natural efficacy the sin of a single evil word. No, there is no deterrent power in prayer. God has never set it to be a cleanser. It has its uses, and its valuable uses. It is one of the privileges of the man who prays, that he prays acceptably, but prayer itself can never blot out the sin without the blood. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," pray as you may.

There are persons who have thought that self-denial and mortifications of an extraordinary kind might rid them of their guilt. We do not often come across such people in our circle, yet there be those who, in order to purge themselves of sin, flagellate their bodies, observe protracted fasts, wear sackcloth and hair shirts next to their skin, and even some have gone so far as to imagine that to refrain from ablutions, and to allow their body to be filthy, was the readiest mode of purifying their soul. A strange infatuation certainly! Yet today, in Hindostan, you shall find the fakir passing his body through marvellous sufferings and distortions, in the hope of getting rid of sin. To what purpose is it all? Methinks I hear the Lord say, "What is this to me that thou didst bow thy head like a bulrush, and wrapt thyself in sackcloth, and eat ashes with thy bread, and mingle wormwood with thy drink? Thou hast broken my law; these things cannot repair it; thou hast done injury to my honour by thy sin; but where is the righteousness that reflects honour upon my name?" The old cry in the olden days was, "Wherewithal shall we come before God?" and they said, "Shall we give our firstborn for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Alas! it was all in vain. Here stands the sentence. Here for ever must it stand, "Without shedding of blood there is no

remission.” It is the life God demands as the penalty due for sin, and nothing but the life indicated in the blood-shedding will ever satisfy him.

Observe, again, how this sweeping text puts away all confidence in ceremony, even the ceremonies of God’s own ordinance. There are some who suppose that sin can be washed away in baptism. Ah! futile fancy! The expression where it is once used in Scripture implies nothing of the kind — it has no such meaning as some attach to it, for that very apostle, of whom it was said, gloried that he had not baptized many persons lest they should suppose there was some efficacy in his administration of the rite. Baptism is an admirable ordinance, in which the believer holds fellowship with Christ in his death. It is a symbol; it is nothing more. Tens of thousands and millions have been baptized and have died in their sins. Or what profit is there in the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, as Antichrist puts it? Do any say it is “an unbloody sacrifice,” yet at the same time offer it for a propitiation for sin — we fling this text in their faces, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Do they reply that the blood is there in the body of Christ? We answer that even were it so, that would not meet the case, for it is without the shedding of blood — without the blood-shedding; the blood as distinct from the flesh; without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

And here I must pass on to make a distinction that will go deeper still. Jesus Christ himself cannot save us, apart from his blood. It is a supposition which only folly has ever made, but we must refute even the hypothesis of folly, when it affirms that the example of Christ can put away human sin, that the holy life of Jesus Christ has put the race on such a good footing with God that now he can forgive its faults and its transgression. Not so; not the holiness of Jesus, not the life of Jesus, not the death of Jesus, but the blood of Jesus only; for “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

And I have met with some who think so much of the second coming of Christ, that they seem to have fixed their entire faith upon Christ in his glory. I believe this to be the fault of Irvingism — that, too much it holds before the sinner’s eye Christ on the throne, whereas, though Christ on the throne is ever the loved and adorable, yet we must see Christ upon the cross, or we never can be saved. Thy faith must not be placed merely in Christ glorified, but in Christ crucified. “God forbid that I should glory,

save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” I remember one person who was united with this church (the dear sister may be present now), that had been for some years a professor, and had never enjoyed peace with God, nor produced any of the fruits of the Spirit. She said, “I have been in a church where I was taught to rest upon Christ glorified, and I did so fix my confidence, such as it was, upon him, that I neither had a sense of sin, nor a sense of pardon, from Christ crucified! I did not know, and until I had seen him as shedding his blood and making a propitiation, I never entered into rest.” Yes, we will say it again, for the text is vitally important: “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission,” not even with Christ himself. It is the sacrifice that he has offered for us, that is the means of putting away our sin — this, and nothing else. Let us pass on a little further with the same truth: —

III. THIS REMISSION OF SIN IS TO BE FOUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

There is remission to be had through Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed. The hymn we sang at the commencement of the service gave you the marrow of the doctrine. We owe to God a debt of punishment for sin. Was that debt due or not? If the law was right, the penalty ought to be exacted. If the penalty was too severe, and the law inaccurate, then God made a mistake. But it is blasphemy to suppose that. The law, then, being a righteous law, and the penalty just, shall God do an unjust thing? It will be an unjust thing for him not to carry out the penalty. Would you have him to be unjust? He had declared that the soul that sinned should die; would you have God to be a liar? Shall he eat his words to save his creatures? “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” The law’s sentence must be carried out. It was inevitable that if God maintained the prerogative of his holiness, he must punish the sins that men have committed. How, then, should he save us? Behold the plan! His dear Son, the Lord of glory, takes upon himself human nature, comes into the place of as many as the Father gave him, stands in their standing, and when the sentence of justice has been proclaimed, and the sword of vengeance has leaped out of its scabbard, behold the glorious Substitute bares his arm, and he says, “Strike, O sword, but strike me, and let my people go.” Into the very soul of Jesus the sword of the law pierced, and his blood was shed, the blood,

not of one who was man only, but of One who, by his being an eternal Spirit was able to offer up himself without spot unto God, in a way which gave infinite efficacy to his sufferings. He, through the eternal Spirit, we are told, offered himself without spot to God. Being in his own nature infinitely beyond the nature of man, comprehending all the natures of man, as it were, within himself, by reason of the majesty of his person, he was able to offer an atonement to God of infinite, boundless, inconceivable sufficiency.

What our Lord suffered none of us can tell. I am sure of this: I would not disparage or under-estimate his physical sufferings — the tortures he endured in his body — but I am equally sure that we can none of us exaggerate or over-value the sufferings of such a soul as his; they are beyond all conception. So pure and so perfect, so exquisitely sensitive, and so immaculately holy was he, that to be numbered with transgressors, to be smitten by his Father, to die (shall I say it?) the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, was the very essence of bitterness, the consummation of anguish. “Yet it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” His sorrows in themselves were what the Greek liturgy well calls them, “unknown sufferings, great griefs.” Hence, too, their efficacy is boundless, without limit. Now, therefore, God is able to forgive sin. He has punished the sin on Christ; it becomes justice, as well as mercy, that God should blot out those debts which have been paid. It were unjust — I speak with reverence, but yet with holy boldness — it were unjust on the part of the infinite Majesty, to lay to my charge a single sin which was laid to the charge of my Substitute. If my Surety took my sin, he released me, and I am clear. Who shall resuscitate judgment against me when I have been condemned in the person of my Saviour? Who shall commit me to the flames of Gehenna, when Christ, my Substitute, has suffered the tantamount of hell for me? Who shall lay anything to my charge when Christ has had all my crimes laid to his charge, answered for them, expiated them, and received the token of quittance from them, in that he was raised from the dead that he might openly vindicate that justification in which by grace I am called and privileged to share? This is all very simple, it lies in a nutshell, but do we all receive it — have we all accepted it? Oh! my dear hearers, the text is full of warning to some of you. You may have an amiable disposition, an excellent character, a serious turn of mind, but you scruple at accepting

Christ; you stumble at this stumbling-stone; you split on this rock. How can I meet your hapless case? I shall not reason with you. I forbear to enter into any argument. I ask you one question. Do you believe this Bible to be inspired of God? Look, then, at that passage, “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” What say you? Is it not plain, absolute, conclusive? Allow me to draw the inference. If you have not an interest in the blood-shedding, which I have briefly endeavoured to describe, is there any remission for you? Can there be? Your own sins are on your head now. Of your hand shall they be demanded at the coming of the great Judge. You may labour, you may toil, you may be sincere in your convictions, and quiet in your conscience, or you may be tossed about with your scruples; but as the Lord liveth, there is no pardon for you, except through this shedding of blood. Do you reject it? On your own head will lie the peril! God has spoken. It cannot be said that your ruin is designed by him when your own remedy is revealed by him.

He bids you take the way which he appoints, and if you reject it, you must die. Your death is suicide, be it deliberate, accidental, or through error of judgment. Your blood be on your own head. You are warned.

On the other hand, what a far-reaching consolation the text gives us! “Without shedding of blood there is no remission,” but where there is the blood-shedding, there is remission. If thou hast come to Christ, thou art saved. If thou canst say from thy very heart: —

“My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin.”

Then, your sin is gone. Where is that young man? where is that young woman? where are those anxious hearts that have been saying, “We would be pardoned now”? Oh! look, look, look, look to the crucified Saviour, and you are pardoned. Ye may go your way, inasmuch as you have accepted God’s atonement. Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Son, rejoice, for thy transgressions are blotted out.

My last word shall be this. You that are teachers of others and trying to do good, cleave fast to this doctrine. Let this be the front, the centre, the pith, and the marrow of all you have to testify. I often preach it, but there is

never a Sabbath in which I go to my bed with such inward content as when I have preached the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Then I feel, "If sinners are lost, I have none of their blood upon me." This is the soul-saving doctrine; grip it, and you shall have laid hold of eternal life; reject it, and you reject it to your confusion. Oh! keep to this. Martin Luther used to say that every sermon ought to have the doctrine of justification by faith in it. True; but let it have the doctrine of atonement in it. He says he could not get the doctrine of justification by faith in to the Wurtembergers' heads, and he felt half inclined to take the book into the pulpit and fling it at their heads, in order to get it in. I am afraid he would not have succeeded if he had. But oh! how would I try to hammer again, and again, and again upon this one nail, "The blood is the life thereof." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Christ giving up his life in pouring out his blood — it is this that gives pardon and peace to every one of you, if you will but look to him — pardon now, complete pardon; pardon for ever. Look away from all other confidences, and rely upon the sufferings and the death of the Incarnate God, who has gone into the heavens, and who lives today to plead before his Father's throne, the merit of the blood which, on Calvary, he poured forth for sinners. As I shall meet you all in that great day, when the crucified One shall come as the King and Lord of all, which day is hastening on apace, as I shall meet you then, I pray you bear me witness that I have striven to tell you in all simplicity what is the way of salvation; and if you reject it, do me this favour, to say that at least I have proffered to you in Jehovah's name this, his gospel, and have earnestly urged you to accept it, that you may be saved. But the rather I would God that I might meet you there, all covered in the one atonement, clothed in the one righteousness, and accepted in the one Saviour, and then together will we sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood to receive honour, and power, and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

FRUITLESS FAITH

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

— James 2:17

Whatever the statement of James may be, it could never have been his intention to contradict the gospel. It could never be possible that the Holy Spirit would say one thing in one place, and another in another. Statements of Paul and of James must be reconciled, and if they were not, I would be prepared sooner to throw overboard the statement of James than that of Paul. Luther did so, I think, most unjustifiably. If you ask me, then, how I dare to say I would sooner do so, my reply is, I said I would sooner throw over James than Paul for this reason, because, at any rate, we must keep to the Master himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought never to raise any questions about differences of inspiration, since they are all equally inspired, but if such questions could be raised and were allowable, it were wisdom to stick fastest to those who cling closest to Christ. Now the last words of the Lord Jesus, before he was taken up were these, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” and what was this gospel? “He that believes

and is baptized shall be saved.” To that, then, we must always cling, but Jesus Christ has given a promise of salvation to the baptized believer, and he has said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Here it is clear he promises everlasting life to all who believe in him, to all who trust in him. Now from the Master’s words we will not stir, but close to his own declaration we will stand. Be assured that the gospel of your salvation as a believer, with a simple confidence in Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead, will save your soul, a simple and undiluted reliance upon the life and death, and resurrection, and merit, and person of Jesus Christ, will ensure to you everlasting life. Let nothing move you from this confidence: it hath great recompense of reward. Heaven and earth may pass away, but from this grand fundamental truth not one jot or tittle shall ever be moved. “He that believeth in him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.”

The fact is, James and Paul are perfectly reconcilable, and they are viewing truth from different standpoints; but whatever James may mean, I am quite confident about what Paul means, and confident about the truth of the two.

A second remark. James never intended, for a moment, nor do any of his words lead us into such a belief, that there can be any merit whatever in any good works of ours. After we have done all, if we could do all, we should only have done what we were bound to do. Surely there is no merit in a man’s paying what he owes; no great merit in a servant who has his wages for doing what he is paid for. The question of merit between the creature and his Creator is not to be raised; he has a right to us; he has the right of creation, the right of preservation, the right of infinite sovereignty, and, whatever he should exact of us, we should require nothing from him in return, and, having sinned as we have all, for us to talk of salvation by merit, by our own works, is worse than vanity; it is an impertinence which God will never endure.

“Talk they of morals, O! thou bleeding Lamb,
The best morality is love of thee.”

Talk of salvation by works, and Cowper’s reply seems apt: —

“Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord.”

What James does mean, however, is this, no doubt, in brief and short, that while faith saves, it is faith of a certain kind. No man is saved by persuading himself that he is saved; nobody is saved by believing Jesus Christ died for him. That may be, or may not be, true in the sense in which he understands it. In a certain sense Christ died for all men, but since it is evident that many men are lost, Christ’s dying for all men is not at all a ground upon which any man may hope to be saved. Christ died for some men in another sense, in a peculiar and special sense. No man has a right to believe that Christ peculiarly and specially died for him until he has an evidence of it in casting himself upon Christ, and trusting in Jesus, and bringing forth suitable works to evince the reality of his faith. The faith that saves is not a historical faith, not a faith that simply believes a creed and certain facts: I have no doubt devils are very orthodox; I do not know which church they belong to, though there are some in all churches; there was one in Christ’s Church when he was on earth, for he said one was filled with devils; and there are some in all churches. Devils believe all the facts of revelation. I do not believe they have a doubt; they have suffered too much from the hand of God to doubt his existence! They have felt too much the terror of his wrath to doubt the righteousness of his government. They are stern believers, but they are not saved; and such a faith, if it be in us, will not, cannot, save us, but will remain to all intents and purposes a dead, inoperative faith. It is a faith which produces works which saves us; the works do not save us; but a faith which does not produce works is a faith that will only deceive, and cannot lead us into heaven. Now this evening we shall first speak a few words upon: —

I. WHAT KIND OF WORKS THEY ARE WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO PROVE OUR FAITH IF IT BE A SAVING FAITH.

The works which are absolutely necessary are, in brief, these: First, there must be fruits meet for repentance, works of repentance. It is wrong to tell

a man he must repent before he may trust Christ, but it is right to tell him that, having trusted Christ, it is not possible for him to remain impenitent. There never was in this world such a thing as an impenitent believer in Jesus Christ, and there never can be. Faith and repentance are born in a spiritual life together, and they grow up together. The moment a man believes he repents, and while he believes he both believes and repents, and until he shall have done with faith he will not have done with repenting. If thou hast believed, but hast never repented of thy sins, then beware of thy believing. If thou pretendest now to be a child of God, and if thou hast never clothed thyself in dust and ashes; if thou hast never hated the sins which once thou didst love: if thou dost not now hate them, and endeavour to be rid of them, if thou dost not humble thyself before God on account of them, as the Lord liveth, thou knowest nothing about saving faith, for faith puts a distance between us and sin; in a moment it leads us away from the distance between us and Christ; nearer to Christ, we are now far off from sin. But he that loves his sin, thinks little of his sin, goes into it with levity, talks of it sportively, speaks of sin as though it were a trifle, hath the faith of devils, but the faith of God's elect he never knew. True faith purges the soul, since the man now hunts after sin that he might find out the traitor that lurks within his nature; and though a believer is not perfect, yet the drift of faith is to make him perfect; and if it is faith to be perfected, the believer shall be perfected, and then shall he be caught up to dwell before the throne. Judge yourselves, my hearers. Have you brought forth the fruits of repentance? If not, your faith without them is dead.

Works of secret piety are also essential to true faith. Does a man say I believe that Jesus died for me, and that I hope to be saved, and does he live in a constant neglect of private prayer? Is the Word of God never read? Does he never lift up his eye in secret with "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth"? Has he no secret regard in his heart to the Lord his God, and does he hold no communion with Christ his Saviour, and is there no fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Then how can faith dwell in such a man? As well say that a man is alive when he does not breathe, and in whom the blood does not circulate, as to say that a man is a believer with living faith who does not draw near to God in prayer, that does not live indeed under the awe and fear of the Most High God as ever present, and seeing him in all places. Judge yourselves, ye professors. Are ye neglecting prayer; have ye no secret spiritual life? If so, away with your notion about saving faith.

You are not justified by such a faith as that; there is no life in it; it is not a faith that leads to the Lamb and brings salvation; if it were, it would show itself by driving you to your knees, and making you lift up your heart to the Most High.

Another set of works are those which I may call works of obedience. When a man trusts in Jesus, he accepts Jesus as his Master. He says, "Show me what thou wouldst have me to do." The Father shows what Christ would have him to do. He does not set up his own will and judgment, but he is obedient to his Master's will. I will not tonight speak of those who know not their Lord's will, who shall be beaten with few stripes, but I do fear me there are some professors who are living in wilful neglect of known Christian duties, and yet suppose themselves to be the partakers of saving faith. Now a duty may be neglected, and yet a man may be saved; but a duty persistently and wilfully neglected, may be the leak that will sink the ship, or the neglect of any one of such duties for the surrender of a true heart to Christ does not go such and such a length and then stop. Christ will save no heart upon terms and conditions; it must be an unconditional surrender to his government if thou wouldst be saved by him. Now some will draw a line here, and some will draw a line there up to this, and say, "I will be Christ's servant"; that is to say, sir, you will be your own master, for that is the English of it; but the true heart that hath really believed saith, "I will make haste, and delay not to keep thy commandments; make straight the path before my feet, for thy commandments are not grievous." "I have delighted in thy commandments more than in fine gold." Now, sons and daughters of sin, professedly, what say you to this? Have you an eye to the Master, as servants keep their eye to their mistress? Do you ever ask yourselves what would Christ have you to do? or do you live habitually in the neglect of Christ's law and will? Do you go to places where Christ would not meet you, and where you would not like to meet with him? Are some of you in the habit of professing maxims and customs, upon which you know your Lord would never set his seal? You say you believe, you have faith in him? Ah! sirs, if it be a living faith, it will be an obedient faith.

Living faith produces what I shall call separating works. When a man believes in Jesus, he is not what he was nor will he consort with those who were once his familiars. Our Lord has said, "Ye are not of the world, even

as I am not of the world.” Now Christ was not an ascetic; he ate and drank as other men do so that they even said of him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, because he mingled with the rest of mankind; but was there ever a more unearthly life than the life of Christ? He seems to go through all the world a complete man in all that is necessary to manliness, but his presence is like the presence of a seraph amongst sinners. You can discover at once that he is not of their mould, nor of their spirit, only harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Now such will the believer be if his faith be genuine, but this is a sharp cut to some professors, but not a whit more sharp than the Scripture warrants. If we are of the world, what can we expect but the world’s doom in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ? If ye find your pleasure with the world, you shall meet your condemnation with the world; if with the world you live, with the world you shall die, and with the world you shall live again for ever, lost. Where there is no separation there is no grace. If we are conformed to this world, how dare we talk about grace being in our souls; and if there be no distinguishing difference between us and worldlings, what vanity it is, what trifling, what hypocrisy, what a delusion for us to come to the Lord’s table, talking about being the Lord’s sons, when we are none of his? Faith without the works which denote the difference between a believer and a worldling is a dead, unsaving faith.

Now I have not said that any believer is perfect. I have never thought so, but I have said that if a believer could be a believer altogether, and faith could have her perfect work, he would be perfect, and that in proportion as he is truly a believer, in that proportion he will bring forth fruit that shall magnify God and prove the sincerity of his faith.

One other set of works will be necessary to prove the vitality of his faith, namely, works of love. He that loves Christ feels that the love of Christ constraineth him; he endeavours to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ; he longs to win jewels for Christ’s crown; he endeavours to extend the boundaries of Christ’s and Messiah’s kingdom, and I will not give a farthing for the loftiest profession coupled with the most flowing words, that never shows itself in direct deeds of Christian service. If thou lovest Christ, thou canst not help serving him. If thou believest in him, there is such potency in what thou believest, such power in the grace which comes

with believing, that thou must serve Christ; and if thou servest him not, thou art not his.

This proof, before we leave it, might be illustrated in various ways. We will just give one. A tree has been planted out into the ground. Now the source of life to that tree is at the root, whether it hath apples on it or not; the apples would not give it life, but the whole of the life of the tree will come from its root. But if that tree stands in the orchard, and when the springtime comes there is no bud, and when the summer comes there is no leafing, and no fruit-bearing, but the next year, and the next, it stands there without bud or blossom, or leaf or fruit, you would say it is dead, and you are correct; it is dead. It is not that the leaves could have made it live, but that the absence of the leaves is a proof that it is dead. So, too, is it with the professor. If he hath life, that life must give fruits; if not fruits, works; if his faith has a root, but if there be no works, then depend upon it the inference that he is spiritually dead is certainly a correct one. When the telegraph cable flashed no message across to America, when they tried to telegraph again and again, but the only result following was dead earth, they felt persuaded that there was a fracture, and well they might; and when there is nothing produced in the life by the supposed grace which we have, and nothing is telegraphed to the world but “dead earth,” we may rest assured that the link of connection between the soul and Christ does not exist.

I need not enlarge. We should just put it into that one sentence: “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Bring forth, therefore, works meet for repentance.” And now we turn to the second point with more brevity: —

II. SOME FACTS THAT BACK UP THE DOCTRINE THAT “FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.”

These facts show that it is evident to all observers that many professors of faith without works are not saved. It would be very ludicrous, if it were not very miserable, to think of some who wrap themselves in the conceit that they are saved about whose salvation nobody but themselves can have any question. I remember a professor who used to talk of being justified by faith who was most assured about it, when he contained most beer. Such professors are not at all uncommon, sad is it to say so. They seem at the moment when their condemnation seems written on their very brow to

all who know them, to be most confident that they themselves are saved. Now, brethren, if such cases are convincing and you entertain no doubt, but decide in their case, apply the same rule to yourselves, for although you may not plunge into the grosser vices, yet if you make your homes wretched by your selfishness, if you fall into constant habits of vicious temper, if you never strive against these sins, and the grace of God never leads you out of them; if you can live in private sin, and yet pacify your conscience, and remain just as you were before your pretended conversion; when you sit in judgment and pronounce the verdict on others, feel that you pronounce it upon yourself, for surely for one sin that is openly indulged in, which is manifested to you in the dissipation of your fellow-creatures, it is not hard for you to believe that any other sin, if it be constantly indulged and be loved, will do the same to you as it does to him. You know men who have not faith, but have a sort of faith, are not saved. It must be true, or else where were the Saviour's words, "Straight is the gate and narrow the way, and few there be that find it"? For this is no straight gate and no narrow way, merely to be orthodox and hold a creed, and say, "I believe Jesus died for me"; but it is a very narrow gate so to believe as to become practically Christ's servants, so to trust as to give up that which Christ hates. Truths which Jesus bids us believe are all truths, which, if believed, must have an effect upon the daily life. A man cannot really believe that Jesus Christ has taken away his sin by such sufferings as those of the cross, and yet trifle with sin. A man is a liar who says, "I believe that yonder bleeding Saviour suffered on account of my sins," and yet holds good fellowship with the very sins that put Christ to death. Oh! sirs, a faith in the bleeding Saviour is a faith that craves for vengeance upon every form of sin. The Christian religion makes us believe that we are the sons of God when we trust in Christ. Will a man believe that he is really the Son of God, and then daily and wilfully go and live like a child of the devil? Do you expect to see members of the royal court playing with beggars in the street? When a man believes himself to possess a certain station of life, that belief leads him to a certain carriage and conversation, and when I am led to believe I am elected of God, that I am redeemed by blood, that heaven is secured to me by the covenant of grace, that I am God's priest, made a king in Christ Jesus, I cannot, if I believe, unless I am more monstrous than human nature itself seems capable of being, go back to live after just the same fashion, to run in the same course as others, and

live as the sons of Belial live. We see constantly in Scripture, and all the saints affirm it, that faith is linked with grace, and that where faith is the grace of God is; but how can there be the gift of God reigning in the soul, and yet a love of sin and a neglect of holiness? I cannot understand grace which abideth for ever to the inner man; and for this man to give himself up to be a slave of Satan is a thing impossible.

Faith, again, is always in connection with regeneration. Now regeneration is making of the old thing new; it is infusing a new nature into a man. The new birth is not a mere reformation, but an entire renovation and revolution: it is making the man a new creation in Christ Jesus. But how a new creature, if he has no repentance, if he has no good works, no private prayer, no charity, no holiness of any kind, regeneration will be a football for scorn. The new birth would be a thing to be ridiculed, if it did not really produce a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness. That kind of new birth which is dispensed by the Church of Rome, and also by some in the Church of England, is a kind of new birth which ought to excite the derision of all mankind, for children are said to be born again, certified to be born again, made members of Christ and children of God, and afterwards they grow up, in many cases, in most cases, let me say, to forget their baptismal vows, and live in sin as others do. Evidently it has had no effect upon them, but regeneration such as we read of in the Bible changes the nature of man, makes him hate the things he loved, and love the things he hated. This is regeneration: this is regeneration which is worth the seeking: it always comes with faith, and consequently good works must go with faith too. But we pass on to the last matter, which is this: —

III. WHAT OF THOSE MEN THAT HAVE FAITH, AND THAT HAVE NO GOOD WORKS?

Then what about them? Why, this about them, that their supposed faith generally makes them very careless and indifferent, and ultimately hardened and depraved men. I dread beyond measure that any one of us should have a name to live when we are dead; for an ordinary sinner who makes no profession may be converted, but it is extremely rare that a sinner who makes a profession of being what he is not is ever converted. It is a miserable thing to find a person discovering that his profession has been a lie. A man sits down, and he says, “Why, I believe,” and as he walks he is careful, because he is afraid of what others might say. By and

bye, he begins to indulge a little. He says, "This is not of works; I may do this, and yet get forgiveness." Then he goes a little further away. I do not say that perhaps at first he goes to the theatre, but he goes next door to it. He does not get drunk, but he likes jovial company. A little further and he gets confirmed in the belief that he is a saved one, and he gets to much confirmed in that idea that he thinks he can do just as he likes. Having sported on the brink without falling over, he thinks he will try to say, if Satan wants raw material of which to make the worst of men, he generally takes those who profess to be the best, and I have questioned whether such a valuable servant of Satan as Judas was could ever have been made of any other material than an apostate apostle. If he had not lived near to Christ, he never could have become such a traitor as he was. You must have a good knowledge of religion to be a thorough-faced hypocrite, and you must become high in Christ's Church before you can become fit tools for Satan's worst works. Oh! but why do men do this? Oh! what is the use of maintaining such a faith? I think if we do not care to get the vitality of religion, I would never burden myself with the husks of it, for such people get the chains of godliness without getting the comforts of godliness. They dare not do this, they dare not do that; if they do they feel hampered. Why don't they give up professing? and they would be at least free; they would have the sin without the millstone about their neck. Surely there can be no excuse for men who mean to perish coming to cover themselves with a mask of godliness! Why cannot they perish as they are? Why add sin to sin by insulting the Church through the cross of Christ?

When men make a profession of religion, and yet their works do not follow their faith, what about them? Why, this about them. They have dishonoured the Church, and, of all others, these are the people that make the world point to the Church and say, "Where is your religion? That is your religion, is it?" So it is when they find a man who professes to be in Christ, and yet walks not as Christ walked. These give the Church her wounds; she receives them in the house of her friends; these make the true ministers of God go to their closets with broken heart, crying out, "Oh! Lord, wherefore hast thou sent us to this people to speak and minister amongst them, that they should play the hypocrite before thee?" These are they that prevent the coming in of others, for others take knowledge of them, as they think religion is hypocrisy, and they are hindered, and, if not seriously, they get, at any rate, comfort in their sin from the iniquity of

these professors. What their judgment will be when Christ appeareth it is not for my tongue to tell; in that day when, with tongue of fire, Christ shall search every heart, and call on all men to receive their judgment, what must be the lot of the base-born professor, who prostituted his profession to his own honour and gain? He sought not the glory of God. What shall be the thunder-bolt that shall pursue his guilty soul in its timorous flight to hell, and what the chains that are reserved in blackness and darkness for ever for those who are wells without water and clouds without rain? I cannot tell, and may God grant that you may never know. Oh! may we all tonight go to Christ to be our complete Saviour in very deed and truth. Then shall we be saved, and then, being saved, we shall seek to serve Christ with heart, and soul, and strength.

Lest I have missed my mark, this one illustration shall suffice, and I have done. There is a vessel drifting. She will soon be on the shore, but a pilot is come on board; he is standing on the deck, and he says to the captain and crew, "I promise and undertake that, if you will solely and alone trust me, I will save thy vessel. Do you promise it; do you believe in me?" They believe in him; they say they believe the pilot can save the vessel, and they trust the vessel implicitly to his care. Now listen to him. "Now," says he, "you at that helm there!" He does not stir. "At the helm there! Can't you hear?" He does not stir! He does not stir! "Well, but, Jack, haven't you confidence in the pilot?" "Oh! yes. Oh! yes, I have faith in him," he says; "he will save the vessel if I have faith in him." "Don't you hear the pilot, as he says have faith in him, and you won't touch the helm?" "Now, you aloft there! Reef that sail." He does not stir, but lets the wind still blow into the sail and drift the vessel on to the coast. "Now then, some of you; look alive, and reef that sail!" But he does not stir! "Why, captain, what shall I do? These fellows won't stir or move a peg." But "Oh!" says the captain; "I have every confidence in you, pilot. I believe you will save the vessel." "Then why don't you attend to the tiller, and all that?" "Oh! no," says he; "I have great confidence in you. I don't mean to do anything." Now when that ship goes down amid the boiling surges, and each man sinks to his doom, I will ask you, had they faith in the pilot? Hadn't they a mimicking, mocking sort of faith, and only that? For if they had been really anxious to have the vessel rescued, and have trusted in the pilot, it would be the pilot that had saved them, and they could never have been saved without him. They would have proved their faith by their works.

Their faith would have been made perfect, and the vessel would have been secured.

I call upon every man here to do what Christ bids him. I call upon you, first of all, to prove that you believe in Christ by being baptized. “He that believeth in Christ and is baptized shall be saved.” The first proof that you believe in Christ is to be given by yielding to the much despised ordinance of believers’ baptism, and then, having done that, going on to the other means of which I have spoken. Oh! I charge you by your soul’s salvation neglect nothing Christ commands, however trivial it may seem to your reason. Whatever he saith unto you, do it, for only by a child-like obedience to every bidding of Christ can you expect to have the promise fulfilled, “They that trust in him shall be saved.” The Lord bless these words, for His name’s sake. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

He was moved with compassion."

— Matthew 9:36

This is said of Christ Jesus several times in the New Testament. The original word is a very remarkable one. It is not found in classic Greek. It is not found in the Septuagint. The fact is, it was a word coined by the evangelists themselves. They did not find one in the whole Greek language that suited their purpose, and therefore they had to make one. It is expressive of the deepest emotion; a striving of the bowels — a yearning of the innermost nature with pity. As the dictionaries tell us — *Ex intimis visceribus misericordia commoveor*. I suppose that when our Saviour looked upon certain sights, those who watched him closely perceived that his internal agitation was very great, his emotions were very deep, and then his face betrayed it, his eyes gushed like founts with tears, and you saw that his big heart was ready to burst with pity for the sorrow upon which his eyes were gazing. He was moved with compassion. His whole nature was agitated with commiseration for the sufferers before him.

Now, although this word is not used many times even by the evangelists, yet it may be taken as a clue to the Saviour's whole life, and I intend thus to apply it to him. If you would sum up the whole character of Christ in

reference to ourselves, it might be gathered into this one sentence, “He was moved with compassion.” Upon this one point we shall try to insist now, and may God grant that good practical result may come of it. First, I shall lead your meditations to the great transactions of our Saviour’s life; secondly, to the special instances in which this expression is used by the evangelists; thirdly, to the forethought which he took on our behalf; and fourthly to the personal testimony which one’s own recollections can furnish. Let us take a rapid survey of: —

I. THE GREAT LIFE OF CHRIST, just touching, as with a swallow’s wing, the evidence it bears from the beginning. Before ever the earth was framed; before the foundations of the everlasting hills were laid, when as yet the stars had not begun their shining, it was known to God that his creature man would sin; that the whole race would fall from its pure original state in the first Adam, the covenant head as well as the common parent of the entire human family; and that in consequence of that one man’s disobedience every soul born of his lineage would become a sinner too. Then, as the Creator knew that his creatures would rebel against him, he saw that it would become necessary, eventually, to avenge his injured law. Therefore, it was purposed, in the eternal plan, ere the stream of time had commenced its course, or ages had begun to accumulate their voluminous records, that there should be an interposer — one ordained to come and re-head the race, to be a second Adam, a federal Chief; to restore the breach, and repair the mischief of the first Adam; to be a Surety to answer for the sons of men on whom God’s love did light; that their sins should be laid upon him, and that he should save them with an everlasting salvation. No angel could venture to intrude into those divine counsels and decrees, or to offer himself as the surety and sponsor for that new covenant. Yet there was one — and he none other than Jehovah’s self — of whom he said, Let all the angels of God worship him, the Son, the well beloved of the Father, of whom it is written in the Word, “When he prepared the heavens I was there, when he set a compass upon the face of the depth, when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountain of the deep”; then, “I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” He it is of whom the Apostle John speaks as the Word who was God, and was in the beginning with God. Was he not moved with compassion when

he entered into a covenant with his father on our behalf, even on the behalf of all his chosen — a covenant in which he was to be the sufferer, and they the gainers — in which he was to bear the shame that he might bring them into his own glory? Yes, verily, he was even then moved with compassion, for his delights even then were with the sons of men. Nor did his compassion peer forth in the prospect of an emergency presently to diminish and disappear as the rebellion took a more active form, and the ruin assumed more palpable proportions. It was no transient feeling. He continued still to pity men. He saw the fall of man; he marked the subtle serpent's mortal sting; he watched the trail as the slime of the serpent passed over the fair glades of Eden; he observed man in his evil progress, adding sin to sin through generation after generation, fouling every page of history until God's patience had been tried to the uttermost; and then, according as it was written in the volume of the Book that he must appear, Jesus Christ came himself into this stricken world. Came how? O, be astonished, ye angels, that ye were witnesses of it, and ye men that ye beheld it. The Infinite came down to earth in the form of an infant; he who spans the heavens and holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand, condescended to hang upon a woman's breast — the King eternal became a little child. Let Bethlehem tell that he had compassion. There was no way of saving us but by stooping to us. To bring earth up to heaven, he must bring heaven down to earth. Therefore, in the incarnation, he must bring heaven down to earth. Therefore, in the incarnation, he had compassion, for he took upon himself our infirmities, and was made like unto ourselves. Matchless pity, indeed, was this!

Then, while he tarried in the world, a man among men, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, he was constantly moved with compassion; for he felt all the griefs of mankind in himself. He took our sicknesses and carried our sorrows: he proved himself a true brother, with quick, human sensibilities. A tear brought a tear into his eye; a cry made him pause to ask what help he could render. So generous was his soul, that he gave all he had for the help of those that had not. The fox had its hole, and the bird its nest, but he had no dwelling-place. Stripped even of his garments, he hung upon the cross to die. Never one so indigent in death as he, without a friend, without even a tomb, except such as a loan could find him. He gave up all the comforts of life — he gave his life itself; he gave his very self to prove that he was

moved with compassion. Most of all do we see how he was moved with compassion in his terrible death. Oft and oft again have I told this story, yet these lips shall be dumb ere they cease to reiterate the old, old tidings. God must punish sin, or else he would relinquish the government of the universe. He could not let iniquity go unchastened without compromising the purity of his administration. Therefore, the law must be honoured, justice must be vindicated, righteousness must be upheld, crime must be expiated by suffering. Who, then, shall endure the penance or make the reparation? Shall the dread sentence fall upon all mankind? How far shall vengeance proceed before equity is satisfied? After what manner shall the sword do homage to the sceptre? Must the elect of God be condemned for their sins? No; Jesus is moved with compassion. He steps in, he takes upon himself the uplifted lash, and his shoulders run with gore; he bares his bosom to the furbished sword, and it smites the Shepherd that the sheep may escape. "He looked, and there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore, his arm brought salvation." He trod the wine-press alone, and "bore, that we might never bear, his Father's righteous ire."

Are ye asked what means the crucifixion of a perfect man upon a felon's cross, ye may reply, "He was moved with compassion." "He saved others; himself he could not save." He was so moved with compassion, that compassion, as it were, did eat him up. He could save nothing from the general conflagration: he was utterly consumed with love, and died in the flame of ardent love towards the sons of men. And after he had died and slept a little while in the grave, he rose again. He has gone into his glory; he is living at the right hand of the Father; but this is just as true of him, "He is moved with compassion." Is proof wanted? Let faith pass within the veil, and let your spirits for a moment stand upon that sea of glass mingled with fire where stand the harpers tuning their never-ceasing melodies. What see you there conspicuous in the very midst of heaven but One who looks like a lamb that has been slain, and wears his priesthood still? What is his occupation there in heaven? He has no bloody sacrifice to offer, for he has perfected for ever those that were set apart. That work is done, but what is he doing now? He is pleading for his people; he is their perpetual Advocate, their continual Intercessor; he never rests until they come to their rest; he never holds his peace for them, but pleads the merit

of his blood, and will do so till all whom the Father gave him shall be with him where he is. Well indeed does our hymn express it: —

“Now, though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well he remembers Calvary,
Nor will his saints forget.”

His tender heart pities all the griefs of his dear people. There is not a pang they have but the head feels it, feels it for all the members. Still doth he look upon their imperfections and their infirmities, yet not with anger, not with loss of patience, but with gentleness and sympathy, “He is moved with compassion.” Having thus briefly sketched the life of Christ, I want you to turn to: —

II. THOSE PASSAGES OF THE EVANGELISTS IN WHICH THEY TESTIFY THAT HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION.

You will find one case in Matthew 20:31: “Two blind men sat by the wayside begging, and when they heard that Jesus passed by, they said, ‘O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on us.’” Jesus stood still, called them, questioned them, and they seem to have had full conviction that he both could and would restore their sight, so Jesus had compassion on them, touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight.

Yes, and what a lesson this is for any here present who have a like conviction. Do you believe that Christ can heal you? Do you believe that he is willing to heal you? Then let me assure you that a channel of communication is opened between him and you, for he is moved with compassion towards you, and already I hear him command you to come to him. He is ready to heal you now. The sad condition of a blind man should always move pity in the breast of the humane, but a glance at these two poor men — I do not know that there was anything strange or uncommon about their appearance — touched the Saviour’s sensibility. And when he heard them say that they did believe he could heal them, he seemed to perceive that they had inward sight, and to account it a pity that they should not have outward sight too. So at once he put his fingers upon their eyes, and they received the power of seeing. O soul, if thou believest Christ can save thee, and if you wilt now trust in him to save thee, be of good cheer, thou art saved; that faith of thine hath saved thee. The very

fact that thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, and doth rely upon him, may stand as evidence to thee that thou art forgiven, that thou art saved. There is no let or bar to thy full redemption. Go thy way and rejoice in thy Lord. He hath compassion on thee.

The next case I shall cite is that of the leper, Mark 1:41. This poor man was covered with a sad and foul disease, when he said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He had full faith in Christ's ability, but he had some doubts as to Christ's willingness. Our Saviour looked at him, and though he might very well have rebuked him that he should doubt his willingness, he merely said, "I will, be thou clean," and straightway he was made whole of that loathsome plague. If there is in this assembly one grievously defiled or openly disgraced by sin, seest thou the leprosy upon thyself, and dost thou say, "I believe he could save me if he would"? Hast thou some lingering doubt about the Saviour's willingness? Yet I beseech you breathe this prayer, "Lord, I believe, I believe thy power. Help thou mine unbelief which lingers round thy willingness." Then little as thy faith is, it shall save thee. Jesus, full of compassion, will pity even thine unbelief, and accept what is faith, and forgive what is unbelief. There is a second instance.

The third I will give you is from Mark 5:19. It was the demoniac. There met Christ a man so possessed with a devil as to be mad, and instead of belief in Christ or asking for healing, this spirit within the man compelled him to say, "Wilt thou torment us before the time?" — and rather to stand against Christ healing him than to ask for it; but Christ was moved with compassion, and he bade the evil spirit come out of the evil man. Oh! I am so glad of this instance of his being moved with compassion. I do not so much wonder that he has pity on those that believe in him, neither do I so much marvel that he has pity even on weak faith; but here was a case in which there was no faith, no desire, nor anything that could commend him to our Lord's sympathy. Is there no such case among the crowds gathered together here? You do not know why you have come into this assembly. You scarcely feel at home in this place. Though you have led a very sad life, you do not want to be converted — not you. You almost shun the thought. Yet it is written, "He will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." Well we have known it in this house, and I hope we shall know it again and again that the Lord has laid violent hands of love upon

unprepared souls. They have been smitten down with repentance, renewed in heart, and saved from their sins. Saul of Tarsus had no thought that he should ever be an apostle of Christ, but the Lord stopped the persecutor, and changed him into a preacher; so that ever afterwards he propagated the faith which once he destroyed. May the Lord have compassion on you tonight. Well may we offer that prayer; for what will be your fate if you die as you are? What will be your doom eternally if you pass out of this world, as soon you must, without being sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and forgiven your iniquities? Jesus knows the terrors of the world to come. He describes the torments of hell. He sees your danger; he warns you; he pities you; he sends his messengers to counsel you; he bids me say to the very chief of sinners, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” “Only return unto me and confess thine iniquity, and I will have mercy upon thee,” saith the Lord. May God grant that the compassion of Christ may be seen in thy case.

As I turned over the Greek Concordance to find out where this word is repeated again and again, I found one instance in Luke 7:13. It refers to the widow at the gates of Nain. Her son was being carried out — her only son. He was dead, and she was desolate. The widow’s only son was to her her sole stay; the succour as well as the solace of her old age. He was dead and laid upon the bier, and when Jesus saw the disconsolate mother, he was moved with compassion, and he restored her son. Oh! is there not refreshment here for you mothers that are weeping for your boys; you that have ungodly sons, unconverted daughters, the Lord Jesus sees your tears. You weep alone sometimes, and when you are sitting and enjoying the Word, you think, “Oh! that my Absalom were renewed; oh! that Ishmael might live before thee.” Jesus knows about it. He was always tender to his own mother, and he will be so to you. And you that are mourning over those that have been lately taken from you, Jesus pities you. Jesus wept, he sympathises with your tears. He will dry them and give you consolation. “He was moved with compassion.”

Still the occasions on which we find this expression most frequently used in the Evangelists are when crowds of people were assembled. At the sight of the great congregations that gathered to hear him, our Lord was often moved with compassion. Sometimes it was because that they were hungry and faint, and in the fulness of his sympathy he multiplied the loaves and

fishes to feed them. At the same time he showed his disciples that it is a good work to feed the poor. He would not have them so spiritually-minded as to forget that the poor have flesh and blood that require sustenance, and they need to eat and to drink, to be housed and clothed: the Christian's charity must not lie in words only, but in deeds. Our Lord was moved with compassion, it is said, when he saw the number of sick people in the throng, for they made a hospital of his preaching place. Wherever he paused or even passed by, they laid the sick in the streets; he could not stand or walk without the spectacle of their pallets to harrow his feelings. And he healed their impotent folk, as if to show that the Christian does well to minister to the sick — that the patient watcher by the bedside may be serving the Lord, and following his example, as well as the most diligent teacher or the most earnest preacher of the glorious gospel. All means that can be used to mitigate human suffering are Christlike, and they ought to be carried out in his name, and carried to the utmost perfection possible. Christ is the patron of the hospital: he is the president of all places where men's bodies are cared for. But we are also told that the multitude excited his compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he taught them as a guide that showed the path by leading the way; and he looked after their welfare as a Shepherd who regarded the health of their bodies as well as the good estate of their souls. Surely, brethren and sisters, if you love him, and wish to be like him, you cannot look on this congregation without pity. You cannot go out into the streets of London and stand in the high roads among the surging masses for half an hour without saying, "Whither away these souls? Which road are they travelling? Will they all meet in heaven?" What! live ye in London, move ye about in this great metropolis, and do ye never have the heartache, never feel your soul ready to burst with pity? Then shame upon you! Ask yourself whether ye have the spirit of Christ at all. In this congregation, were we all moved with pity as we should be, I should not have to complain, as I sometimes must, that persons come in and out here in want of someone to speak with them, to condole, to console, or to commune with them in their loneliness, and they find no helper. Time was when such a thing never occurred, but, in conversing with enquirers lately, I have met with several cases in which persons in a distressed state of mind have said that they would have given anything for half an hour's conversation with any Christian to whom they might have

opened their hearts. They came from the country, attended the Tabernacle, and no one spoke to them. I am sorry it should be so. You used to watch for souls, most of you. Very careful were you to speak to those whom you saw again and again. I do pray you mend that matter. If you have any bowels of mercy, you should be looking out for opportunities to do good. Oh! never let a poor wounded soul faint for want of the balm. You know the balm. It has healed yourselves. Use it wherever the arrows of God have smitten a soul. Enough; I must leave this point; I have given you, I think, every case in which it is said that Jesus was moved with compassion. Very briefly let me notice: —

III. SOME OF THE FORESIGHTS OF HIS COMPASSION.

The Lord has gone from us, but as he knew what would happen while he was away, he has, with blessed forethought, provided for our wants. Well he knew that we should never be able to preserve the truth pure by tradition. That is a stream that always muddies and defiles everything. So in tender forethought he has given us the consolidated testimony, the unchangeable truth in his own Book; for he was moved with compassion. He knew the priests would not preach the gospel; he knew that no order of men could be trusted to hold fast sound doctrine from generation to generation; he knew there would be hirelings that dare not be faithful to their conscience lest they should lose their pay; while there would be others who love to tickle men's ears and flatter their vanity rather than to tell out plainly and distinctly the whole counsel of God. Therefore, he has put it here, so that if you live where there is no preacher of the gospel, you have the old Book to go to. He is moved with compassion for you. For where a man cannot go, the Book can go, and where in silence no voice is heard, the still clear voice of this blessed Book can reach the heart. Because he knew the people would require this sacred teaching, and could not have it otherwise, he was moved with compassion towards us all, and gave us the blessed Book of inspired God-breathed Scripture.

But then, since he knew that some would not read the Bible, and others might read and not understand it, he has sent his ministers forth to do the work of evangelists. He raises up men, saved themselves from great sin, trophies of redeeming grace, who feel a sympathy with their fellow-men who are revelling in sin, reckless of their danger. These servants of his the Lord enables to preach his truth, some with more, some with less ability

than others; still, there are, thank God, throughout this happy realm, and in other favoured lands, men everywhere, who, because sinners will not come to Christ of themselves, go after them and persuade them, plead with them, and intreat them to believe and turn to the Lord. This cometh of Christ's tender gentleness. He was moved with compassion, and therefore he sent his servants to call sinners to repentance.

But since the minister, though he may call as he may, will not bring souls to Christ of himself, the Lord Jesus, moved with compassion, has sent his Spirit. The Holy Ghost is here. We have not to say: —

“Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove.”

He is here. He dwells in his Church, and he moves over the congregation, and he touches men's hearts, and he subtly inclines them to believe in Christ. Oh! this is great mercy when a Prince spreads a feast and gives an invitation. That is all you can expect him to do. But if he keeps a host of footmen and says, “Go and fetch them one by one till they do come,” that is more gracious still. But if he goes himself and with sacred violence compels them to come in — oh! this is more than we could have thought he would have done; but he is moved with compassion, and he does that. Furthermore, brethren, the Lord Jesus knew that after we were saved from the damning power of sin, we should always be full of wants, and therefore he was moved with compassion, and he sets up the throne of grace, the mercy-seat, to which we may always come, and from which we may always obtain grace to help in time of need. Helped by his Spirit, we can bring what petitions we will, and they shall be heard. And then, since he knew we could not pray as we ought, he was moved with compassion when he sent the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, to teach us how to pray. Now I do not know a single infirmity that I have or that you have, my Christian brother, but what Christ Jesus has been moved with compassion about it, and has provided for it. He has not left one single weak point of which we have to say, “There I shall fail, because he will not help there”; but he has looked us over and over from head to foot, and said, “You will have an infirmity there: I will provide for it. You will have a weakness there: I will provide for it.” And oh! how his promises meet every case! Did you ever get into a corner where there was not a promise in the corner too? Had you ever to pass through a river but there was a promise about his being in the river with you? Were you ever on the sick

bed without a promise like this, “I will make thy bed in thy sickness?” In the midst of pestilence have not you found a promise that “he shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust?” The Lord’s great compassion has met the wants of all his servants to the end. If our children should ever need much patience to be exercised towards them as Christ needs to exercise towards us, I am sure there would be none of us able to bear the house. They have their infirmities, and they full often vex and grieve us, it may be, but oh! we ought to have much compassion for the infirmities of our children — ay, and of our brethren and sisters, and neighbours — for what compassion has the Lord had with us? I do believe none but God could bear with such untoward children as we ourselves are. He sees our faults, you know, when we do not see them, and he knows what those faults are more thoroughly than we do. Yet still he never smites in anger. He cuts us not off, but he still continues to show us abounding mercies. Oh! what a guardian Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and how we ought to bless his name at all times, and how his praise should be continually in our mouth. One thought strikes me that I must put in here: he knew that we should be very forgetful; and he was moved with compassion with our forgetfulness when he instituted the blessed Supper, and we can sit around the table and break bread, and pour forth the wine in remembrance of him. Surely this is another instance of how he is moved with compassion, and not with indignation, towards our weaknesses. And now let me close with: — —

IV. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

I shall only recall my own experience in order to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, my brethren and sisters. I do well remember when I was under conviction of sin, and smarted bitterly under the rod of God, that when I was most heavy and depressed there would sometimes come something like hope across my spirit. I knew what it was to say, “My soul chooseth strangling rather than life,” yet when I was at the lowest ebb and most ready to despair, though I could not quite lay hold of Christ, I used to get a touch of the promise now and then, till I half hoped that, after all, I might prove to be God’s prisoner, and he might yet set me free. I do remember well, when my sins compassed me about like bees, and I thought it was all over with me, and I must be destroyed by them, it was

at that moment when Jesus revealed himself to me. Had he waited a little longer, I had died of despair, but that was no desire of his. On swift wings of love he came and manifested his dear wounded self to my heart. I looked to him and was lightened, and my peace flowed like a river. I rejoiced in him. Yes, he was moved with compassion. He would not let the pangs of conviction be too severe; neither would he suffer them to be protracted too long for the spirit of man to fail before him. It is not his wont to break a leaf that is driven by the tempest. "He will not quench the smoking flax." Yea, and I do remember since I first saw him and began to love him many sharp and severe troubles, dark and heavy trials, yet have I noted this, that they have never reached that pitch of severity which I was unable to bear. When all gates seemed closed, there has still been with the trial a way of escape, and I have noted again that in deeper depressions of spirits through which I have passed, and horrible despondencies that have crushed me down, I have had some gleams of love, and hope, and faith at the last moment; for he was moved with compassion. If he withdrew his face, it was only till my heart broke for him, and then he showed me the light of his countenance again. If he laid the rod upon me, yet when my soul cried under his chastening he could not bear it, but he put back the rod, and he said, "My child, I will comfort thee." Oh! the comforts that he gives on a sick bed! Oh! the consolations of Christ! when you are very low. If there is anything dainty to the taste in the Word of God, you get it then; if there be any bowels of mercy, you hear them sounding for you then. When you are in the saddest plight, Christ comes to your aid with the sweetest manifestations; for he is moved with compassion. How frequently have I noticed, and I tell it to his praise, for though it shows my weakness, it proves his compassion, that sometimes, after preaching the gospel, I have been so filled with self-reproach, that I could hardly sleep through the night because I had not preached as I desired. I have sat me down and cried over some sermons, as though I knew that I had missed the mark and lost the opportunity. Not once nor twice, but many a time has it happened, that within a few days someone has come to tell me that he found the Lord through that very sermon, the shortcoming of which I had deplored. Glory be to Jesus; it was his gentleness that did it. He did not want his servant to be too much bowed down with a sense of infirmity, and so he had compassion on him and comforted him. Have not you noticed, some of you, that after doing your best to serve the Lord, when somebody has

sneered at you, or you have met with such a rebuff as made you half-inclined to give up the work, an unexpected success has been given you, so that you have not played the Jonah and ran away to Tarshish, but kept to your work? Ah! how many times in your life, if you could read it all, you would have to stop and write between the lines, "He was moved with compassion." Many and many a time, when no other compassion could help, when all the sympathy of friends would be unavailing, he has been moved with compassion towards us, has said to us, "Be of good cheer," banished our fears with the magic of his voice, and filled our souls to overflowing with gratitude. When we have been misrepresented, traduced, and slandered, we have found in the sympathy of Christ our richest support, till we could sing with rapture the verse — I cannot help quoting it now, though I have often quoted it before: —

"If on my face for thy dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
Since thou rememberest me."

The compassion of the Master making up for all the abuses of his enemies. And, believe me, there is nothing sweeter to a forlorn and broken spirit than the fact that Jesus has compassion. Are any of you sad and lonely? Have any of you been cruelly wronged? Have you lost the goodwill of some you esteemed? Do you seem as if you had the cold shoulder even from good people? Do not say, in the anguish of your spirit, "I am lost," and give up. He hath compassion on you. Nay, poor fallen woman, seek not the dark river and the cold stream — he has compassion. He who looks down with the bright eyes of yonder stars and watches thee is thy friend. He yet can help thee. Though thou hast gone so far from the path of virtue, throw not thyself away in blank despair, for he hath compassion. And thou, broken down in health and broken down in fortune, scarcely with shoe to thy feet, thou art welcome in the house of God, welcome as the most honoured guest in the assembly of the saints. Let not the weighty grief that overhangs thy soul tempt thee to think that hopeless darkness has settled thy fate and foreclosed thy doom. Though thy sin may have beggared thee, Christ can enrich thee with better riches. He hath compassion. "Ah!" say you, "they will pass me on the stairs; they will give me a broad pathway, and if they see me in the street they will not

“speak to me — even his disciples will not.” Be it so; but better than his disciples, tenderer by far, is Jesus. Is there a man here, whom to associate with were a scandal from which the pure and pious would shrink?; the holy, harmless, undefiled one will not disdain even him — for this man receiveth sinners — he is a friend of publicans and sinners. He is never happier than when he is relieving and retrieving the forlorn, the abject, and the outcast. He despises not any that confess their sins and seek his mercy. No pride nestles in his dear heart, no sarcastic word rolls off his gracious tongue, no bitter expression falls from his blessed lips. He still receives the guilty. Pray to him now. Now let the silent prayer go up, “My Saviour, have pity upon me; be moved with compassion towards me, for if misery be any qualification for mercy, I am a fit object for thy compassion. Oh! save me for thy mercy’s sake!” Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

STRONG FAITH IN A FAITHFUL GOD

A Sermon

Published on Thursday, February 11th, 1915. Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

“I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.”

— Psalm 57:2

David was in the cave of Adullam. He had fled from Saul, his remorseless foe; and had found shelter in the clefts of the rock. In the beginning of this psalm he rings the alarm-bell, and very loud is the sound of it. “Be merciful unto me,” and then the clapper hits the other side of the bell. “Be merciful unto me.” He utters his misery again and again. “My soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.” Thus he solaces himself by faith in his God. Faith is ever an active grace. Its activity, however, is first of all manifested in prayer. This precedes any action. “I will cry,” says he, “unto God most high.” You know how graciously he was preserved in the cave, even when Saul was close at his heels. Amongst the winding intricacies of those caverns he was enabled to conceal himself, though his enemy, with armed men, was close at hand. The Targum has a note upon this, which may or may not be true. It states that a spider spun its web over the door of that part of the cave where David was concealed. The legend is not unlike one told of another king at a later time. It may have been true of David, and it is quite as likely to be true of the other. If so, David would, in such a passage as this, have directed his thoughts to

the little acts God had performed for him which had become great in their results. If God makes a spider spin a web to save his servant's life, David traces his deliverance not to the spider, but to the wonder-working Jehovah, and he saith, "I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me." It is delightful to see these exquisite prayers come from holy men in times of extreme distress. As the sick oyster makes the pearl, and not the healthy one, so doth it seem as if the child of God brought forth gems of prayer in affliction more pure, brilliant, and sparkling than any that he produces in times of joy and exultation.

Our text is capable of three meanings. To these three meanings we shall call your attention briefly. "Unto God who performeth all things for me,—" First, there is infinite providence. As it stands, the words, "all things," you perceive, have been added by the translators; not that they were mistaken in so doing, for the unlimited expression, "God that performeth for me," allows them to supply the ellipsis without any violation of the sense. Secondly, there is inviolable faithfulness, as we know that David here referred to God's working out the fulfilment of the promises he had made. We sang just now of the sweet promise of his grace as the performing God. I think Dr. Watts borrowed that expression from this verse. Thirdly, there is a certainty of ultimate completeness. The original has for its root the word "finishing," and now working it out, it means a God that performeth or, as it were, perfects and accomplishes all things concerning me. Whatever there is in his promise or covenant that I may need, he will perfect for me. To begin with: —

I. THE MARVELLOUS PROVIDENCE.

The text, as it stands, speaks of a service — "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me." "All things," that is to say, in everything that I have to do, I am but an instrument in his hand; it is God that doeth it for me. The Christian has no right to have anything to do for which he cannot ask God's help. Nay, he should have no business which he could not leave with his God. It is his to work and to exercise prudence, but it is his to call in the aid of God to his work, and to leave the care of it with the God who careth for him. Any work in which he cannot ask divine cooperation, the care of which he cannot cast upon God, is unfit for him to be engaged in. Depend upon it, if I cannot say of the whole of my life, "God performeth all things for me," there is sin somewhere, evil

lurks in the disposition thereof. If I am living in such a state that I cannot ask God to carry out for me the enterprises I have embarked in, and entirely rely on his providence for the issues, then what I cannot ask him to do for me, neither have I any right to do for myself. Let us think, therefore, of the whole of our ordinary life, and apply the text to it. Should we not each morning cry unto God to give us help through the day? Though we are not going out to preach; though we are not going up to the assembly for worship; though it is only our ordinary business, that ordinary business ought to be a consecrated thing. Opportunities for God's service should be sought in our common avocations; we may glorify God very much therein. On the other hand, our souls may suffer serious damage, we may do much mischief to the cause of Christ in the ordinary walk of any one day. It is for us, then, to begin the day with prayer — to continue all through the day in the same spirit, and to close the day by commending whatsoever we have done to that same Lord. Any success attending that day, if it be real success, is of God who gives it to us. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," is a statement applicable to the whole of Christian life. It is vain to rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. If there be any true blessing, such blessing, as Jabez craved, when he said, "Oh! that thou wouldst bless me indeed," it must come from the God of heaven; it can come from nowhere else. Cry then, Christian, concerning your common life to God, say continually I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for you.

Peradventure at this hour you are troubled about some petty little thing, or you have been through the day exercised about some trivial matter. Do you not think we often suffer more from our little troubles than from our great ones? A thorn in the foot will irritate our temper, while the dislocation of a joint would reveal our fortitude. Often the man who would bear the loss of a fortune with the equanimity of Job will wince and fume under a paltry annoyance that might rather excite a smile than a groan. We are apt to be disquieted in vain. Does not this very much arise from our forgetting that God performeth all things for us? Do we not ignore the fact that our success in little things, our rightness in the minutinae of life, our comfort in these inconsiderable trifles depends upon his blessing? Know ye not that God can make the gnat and the fly to be a greater trouble to Egypt than the murrain, the thunder, or the storm? Little trials, if unblessed — if

unattended with the divine favour, may scourge you fearfully and betray you into much sin. Commend them to God then. And little blessings as you think them, if taken away from you, would soon involve very serious consequences. Thank God then for the little. Put the little into his hand; it is nothing to Jehovah to work in the little, for the great is little to him. There is not much difference, after all, in our littles and our greats to the infinite mind of our glorious God. Cast all on him who numbers the hairs of your head, and suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without his decree. Unto God cry about the little things, for he performeth all things for us. Do I speak to some who are contemplating a great change in life? Take not that step, my brother, without much careful waiting upon God; but if thou be persuaded that the change is one that hath the Master's approbation, fear not, for he performeth all things for thee. At this moment, thou hast many perplexities; thou mayest chafe thyself with anxiety, and make thyself foolish with shilly-shallying if thou dost sport with fancy, conjuring up bright dreams, and yielding to dark forebodings. There is many a knot we seek to untie, which were better cut with the sword of faith. We should end our difficulties by leaving them with him who knows the end from the beginning. Up to this moment you have been rightly led: you have the same guide. To this hour, he who sent the cloudy pillar has led you rightly through the devious track-ways of the wilderness; follow still, with a sure confidence that all is well. If ye keep close to him, he performeth all things for you. Take your guidance from his Word, and, waiting upon him in prayer, you need not fear. Just now, mayhap, in addition to some exciting dilemma, you are surrounded with real trouble and distress. Will it not be well to cry unto God most high, who now, in the time of your strait and difficulty, will show himself again to you a God all-sufficient to his people in their times of need. He is always near. I do not know that he has said, "When thou walkest through the green pastures, I will be with thee, and when thy way lies hard by the river of the water of life, where lilies bloom, I will strengthen thee." I believe he will do so, but I do not remember such a promise; but "When thou goest through the rivers, I will be with thee," is a well-known word of his. If ever he is present, it shall be in trial: if he can be absent, it will certainly not be when his servants most want his aid. Rest ye in him then. But you say, "I can do so little in this time of difficulty." Do what thou canst, but leave the rest to him. If thou seest no way of escape, doth it

follow that there is none? If thou seest no help, is it, therefore, to be inferred that help cannot come? Thy Lord and Saviour found no friend among the whole family of man, “Yet,” said he, “could I not presently pray to my Father, and he would send me twelve legions of angels?” Were it needful for thy help, the squadrons of heaven would leave the glory-land to come to thy rescue — the least and poorest of the children of God as thou mayest be. He will perform for thee: be thou obedient, trustful, patient. ‘Tis thine to obey, ‘tis his to command, ‘tis thine to perceive, ‘tis his to perform. He will perform all things for you. Very likely amongst this audience, some are foolish enough to perplex themselves as to their future life, and forestall the time when they shall grow old and their vigour shall be abated. It is always unwise to anticipate our troubles. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Of all self-torture, that of importing future trouble into present account is, perhaps, the most insane. Do you tell me you cannot help looking into the future. Well, then, look and peer into the distance as far as your weak vision can reach, but do not breathe upon the telescope with your anxious breath and fancy you see clouds. On the contrary, just wipe your eyes with the soft kerchief of some gracious word of promise, and hold your breath while you gaze through that transparent medium. Use the eye-salve of faith. Then, whatever you discern of the future, you will also descry this. He rules and he overrules: he will make all things work together for good; he will surely bring you through. Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. He it is who will perform all things for you. Oh! strange infatuation! You see your weakness, you see the temptations that will assail you, and the troubles that threaten you, and you are afraid. Look away from them all. This is no business of yours. Leave it in his hands, who will manage well, who will be sure to do the kindest and the best thing for you; be of good confidence and rest in peace. So shall it be even at life’s close. He performeth all things for me. I have the boundary of life in the perspective, the almost certainty that I must die. Unless the Lord comes before my term expires, I must close these eyes, gather up these feet in the bed, breathe a last gasp, and yield my soul to him who gave it. Well, fear not; he helped me to live: he will help me to die. He has made me perform up to this moment my allotted task; yea, he has performed it for me, giving me his grace and working his providence with me. Shall I fear that he will desert me at the

last? He performeth not some things, but all things, and he cannot omit this most important thing, which often makes me tremble. No; that must be included, for all things are mine — death as well as life. I leave my dying hour, then, with him, and never boding ill of it, I cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me. I want, dear brethren, just to leave this impression in your mind, that in the great business of life, whatever it is, while we do not sit still and fold our hands for lack of work, yet God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. This we recognize distinctly; if anything be done aright, successfully, it is God that performs it, and we give him the glory. I want you to feel that, as the task is performed by him in all its details, so to the very close of your life, all shall be performed of his grace through you by himself, to his own honour and praise, world without end. The second run of thought which the text suggests is that of: —

II. INVIOLEABLE FAITHFULNESS.

“Unto God that performeth all things for me.” The God who made the promises has not left them as pictures, but has made them to fulfil them. It is God who is the actual worker of all that he declared in the covenant of grace should be wrought in and for his people.

Let us think of this as it pertains to our Redeemer’s merits. “Unto God that performeth all things for me.” Meritoriously our Saviour-God has performed all things for us. Our sin has been all put away; he bore it all — every particle of it. The righteousness that wraps us is complete; he has woven it all from the top throughout. All that God’s infinite, unflinching justice can ask of us has been performed for us by our Surety and our Covenant Head. I need not say I have to fight; my warfare is accomplished. I need not think I have to wash away my sins; as a believer, my sin is pardoned. All things are performed for me. Don’t forget amidst your service for Christ what service Christ has rendered to you; do all things for Christ, but let the stimulating motive be that Christ has done all things for you. There is not even a little thing that is for you to do to complete the work of Christ. The temple he has builded wants not that you should find a single stone to make it perfect. The ransom he has paid does not wait until you add the last mite. It is all done. O soul, if Christ has completely redeemed thee and saved thee, rest thou on him, and cry to him, and if sin rebels within thee at this present moment, fly — though

thy spirit be shut up as in the Cave Adullam- -fly to him by faith — to him who hath done all things for thee as thy Representative and Substitute. After the same manner, all things in us that have ever been wrought there have been performed by God for us. The Holy Spirit has wrought every fraction of good that is within our souls. No one flower that God loves grows in the garden of our souls in the natural soil, self-sown. The first trembling desire after God came from his Spirit. The blade, though very tender would never have sprung up if Jesus had not sown the seed. Though the first rays of dawn were scarcely light, but only rendered the darkness visible, yet from the Sun of Righteousness they came; no light sprang from the natural darkness of our spirit. It could not be that life could be begotten of death, or that light could be the child of darkness. He began the work: he led us when we went tremblingly to the foot of the cross; he helped us when we followed him with staggering steps. The eyes with which we looked to Jesus and believed were opened by him. Christ was revealed to us not by our own discovery, nor by our own tuition, but the Spirit of God revealed the Son of God in our spirit. We looked and we were lightened. The vision and the enlightening were alike from him; he performed all for us. As I look back upon my own spiritual career, when I was seeking the Saviour, I am wonderfully struck with the way in which God performed everything for me; for if he had not, I do remember well when I should have rendered it impossible for me to have been here to tell of the wonders of his grace. Hard pressed by Satan and by sin, my soul chose strangling rather than life. Had I known more of my own guiltiness, my heart would utterly have broken, and my life have failed. But wisdom and prudence were mingled with the teachings of God's law. He did not suffer the schoolmaster to be too severe, but stayed the soul beneath the dire remorse which conviction caused. I had never believed on him if he had not taught me to believe. To give up hope in self was desperate work, and then to find hope in Christ seemed more desperate still. It appeared to me easy enough to believe in Jesus while one was really believing in one's self, but when "despair" was written upon self, then one was too apt to transfer the despair even to the cross itself, and it appeared impossible to believe. But the Spirit wrought faith in me, and I believed. That is not my testimony only, but the testimony of all my brethren and sisters — in that hour of sore trouble it was God that performed all things for us. Since then and up to this moment, my brethren, if there has been any virtue; if there

has been in you anything lovely and of good repute, to whom do you or can you attribute it? Must you not say, “Of him all my fruit was found”? You could not have done without him. If you have made any progress, if you have made any advance, or even if you think you have, believe me, your growth, advance, progress, have all been a mistake unless they have come entirely from him. There is no wealth for us but that which is digged in this mine. There is no strength for us but that which comes from the Omnipotent One himself. “Thou who performest all things for me,” must be our cry up to this hour.

What a consolation it is that our God never changes! What he was yesterday he is today. What we find him today we shall find him for ever. Are you struggling against sin? Don’t struggle in your own strength: it is God who performeth all things for you. Victories over sin are only sham victories unless we overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and through the power of divine grace. I am afraid of backsliding, but I think I am more afraid still of growing in sanctification apparently in my own strength. It is a dreadful thing for the grey hairs to appear here and there; but it is worse still for the hair to appear to be of raven hue when the man is weak. Only the indication is changed, but not the state itself. May we have really what we think we have — no surface work, but deep, inner, spiritual life, wrought in us from God — yea, every good spiritual thing from him, who performeth all things for us; and, I say, whatever struggles may come, whatever vehement temptations assail, or whatever thunder-clouds may burst over your heads, you shall not be deserted, much less destroyed. In spiritual things it is God who performeth all things for you. Rest in him then. It is no work of yours to save your own soul; Christ is the Saviour. If he cannot save you, you certainly cannot save yourself. Why rest you your hopes where hopes never ought to be rested? Or let me change the question. Why do you fear where you never ought to have hoped? Instead of fearing that you cannot hold on, despair of holding on yourself, and never look in that direction again. But if the preservation be of God, where is the cause for perturbation with you? In him let your entire reliance be fixed. Cast the burden of your care on him who performeth all things for you. Lastly, the text in its moral, literal acceptance refers to: —

III. THE FINISHING STROKE OF A GRAND DESIGN.

It really means, "I will cry unto God most high — unto God who perfecteth all things concerning me." David's career was charged with a great work; it was portentous with a high destiny. He had been anointed when a lad by Samuel. The Lord had said, "I have provided me a king among the sons of Jesse." And Samuel had taken "the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren." He was thus clearly ordained to be king over Israel. His way to the throne was by Adullam. Strange route! To be king over Israel and Judah, he must first become a rebel, a wandering vagabond, known as a chieftain of banditti, hunted about by Saul, the reigning monarch. He must seek refuge in the courts of his country's enemies, the Philistines — being without an earthly refuge, or place to lay his head. Strange way to a throne! Yet the son of David had to go that way, and all the sons of God. The younger brethren of the Crown Prince will have to find their way to their crown by much the same route. But is not this a brave thing? Though Adullam does not look like the way to Zion, where he shall be crowned, David is so confident that what God has said will come to pass, so sure that Samuel's anointing was no farce, but that he must be king, that he praises and blesses God that while he is making of him a houseless wanderer, he is perfecting that which concerns him, and leading him by a sure path to the throne. Now, can I believe that he who promises that I shall be with him where he is, that I may behold his glory — he who gives the certainty to every believer that he shall enter into everlasting happiness — can I believe tonight that he is perfecting that for me — that the way by which he is taking me tonight, so dark, so gloomy, so full of dangers, is, nevertheless, the shortest way to heaven? that he is tonight using the quickest method to perfect that which concerns my soul? O faith! here is something for thee to do; and if thou canst perform it, thou shalt bring glory to God. The pith of it is this: that if God hath the keeping of us, he will perfect the keeping in the day of Christ. In the hand of Jesus all his people are, and in that hand they shall be for ever and ever. "None shall pluck them out of my hand," saith he. Their preservation shall be perfected. So, too, their sanctification. Every child of God is set apart by Christ, and in Christ, and the work of the Spirit has commenced which shall subdue sin, and extirpate the very roots of corruption; and this work shall be perfected; nay, is being perfected at this very moment. The dragon is being trodden down under foot. The seed of

the woman within us is beginning to bruise the serpent's head, and shall clearly bruise it and crush it, even to the death within our soul. He is perfecting us in all things for himself. He has promised to bring us to glory. We have the earnest of that great glory in us now. The new life is there; all the elements of heaven are within us. Now he will perfect all these. He will not suffer one good thing that he has planted within us to die. It is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. He will perfect all things for us. There is nothing that makes the saints complete but what God will give to us. There shall be lacking us no one trait of loveliness that is needful for the courtiers of the skies; no one virtue that is necessary in us. What a marvellous thing is a Christian! How mean; how noble! How abject; how august! How near to hell; how close to heaven! How fallen, yet lifted up! Able to do nothing; yet doing all things! Doing nothing; yet accomplishing all things; because herein it is that, in the man, and with the man, there is God, and he performeth all things for us. God, give us grace to look away entirely, evermore, from ourselves, and to depend entirely upon him.

Now is there a soul here that desires salvation? My text gives you the clue of comfort. Try — the thing is simple — try. Look to him: he performeth all things for you. Everything that is wanted to save your soul, your heavenly Father will give you. Jesus, the Saviour, has wrought out all the sinner's wants. You have but to come and take what is already accomplished, and rest in it. "I cannot save myself," say you. You need not: there is One who performeth all things for you. "I am bruised and mangled by the fall," saith one, "as though every bone were broken." "I am incapable of a good thought; there is nothing good in me, or that can come from me." Soul! it is not what thou canst do, but what God can do — what Christ has done — that must be the ground of thy hope. Give thyself up unto God, most high — unto God, who performeth all things for thee, and thou shalt be blessed indeed. God send you away with his own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

A WARNING TO BELIEVERS

A Sermon

Published on Thursday, July 8th, 1915.

Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

on Thursday Evening, June 16th, 1870.

“Let no man beguile you of your reward.”

— Colossians 2:18

There is an allusion here to the prize which was offered to the runners in the Olympic games, and at the outset it is well for us to remark how very frequently the Apostle Paul conducts us by his metaphors to the racecourse. Over and over again he is telling us so to run that we may obtain, bidding us to strive, and at other times to agonize, and speaking of wrestling and contending. Ought not this to make us feel what an intense thing the Christian life is — not a thing of sleepiness or haphazard, not a thing to be left now and then to a little superficial consideration? It must be a matter which demands all our strength, so that when we are saved there is a living principle put within us which demands all our energies, and gives us energy over and above any that we ever had before. Those who dream that carelessness will find its way to heaven have made a great mistake. The way to hell is neglect, but the way to heaven is very different. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” A little matter of neglect brings you to ruin, but our Master’s words are “Strive to enter in at the straight gate, for many, I say unto you,

shall seek” — merely seek — “to enter in, and shall not be able.” Striving is wanted more than seeking. Let us pray that God the Holy Spirit would always enable us to be in downright, awful earnest about the salvation of our souls. May we never count this a matter of secondary importance, but may we seek first, and beyond everything else, the kingdom of God and his righteousness. May we lay hold on eternal life; may we so run that we may obtain.

I would press this upon your memories because I do observe, observe it in myself as well as in my fellow-Christians, that we are often more earnest about the things of this life than we are about the things of the life to come. We are all impressed with the fact that in these days of competition, if a man would not be run over and crushed beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of poverty, he must exert himself. No man seems now able to keep his head above water with the faint-swimmer strokes which our forefathers used to give. We have to strive, and the bread that perisheth hath to be laboured for. Shall it be that this poor world shall engross our earliest thoughts and our latest cares, and shall the world to come have only now and then a consideration? No; may we love our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, and may we lay our body, soul, and spirit upon the altar of Christ’s service, for these are but our reasonable sacrifice to him.

Now the Apostle in the text before us gives us a warning, which comes to the same thing, however it is interpreted; but the passage is somewhat difficult of rendering, and there have been several meanings given to it. Out of these there are three meanings which have been given of the text before us which are worthy of notice. “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” The Apostle, in the first place, may mean here: —

I. LET NO MAN BEGUILÉ ANY OF YOU who profess to be followers of Christ of the great reward that will await the faithful at the last.

Now, my brethren, we have, many of us, commenced the Christian race, or we profess to have done so, but the number of the starters is far greater than the number of the winners. “They that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize.” “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Many commence, apparently, in the Christian career, but after a while, though they did run well, something hinders them that they do not obey the truth,

and they go out from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. Now we may expect, now that we have commenced to run, that some will come and try to turn us out of the race course openly — not plausibly and with sophistry, but with an open and honest wickedness. Some will tell us plainly that there is no reward to run for, that our religion is all a mistake, that the pleasures of this world are the only things worth seeking, that there are delights of the flesh and the lusts thereof, and that we should do well to enjoy them. We shall meet the Atheist with his sneer and with his ringing laugh. We shall meet with all kinds of persons who will to our faces tell us to turn back, for there is no heaven, there is no Christ, or, if there be, it is not worth our while to take so much trouble to find him. Take heed of these people. Meet them face to face with dauntless courage. Mind not their sneers. If they persecute you only, reckon this to be an honour to you, for what is persecution but the tribute which wickedness pays to righteousness, and what is it, indeed, but the recognition of the seed of the woman when the seed of the serpent would fain bite his heel?

But the Apostle does not warn you so much against those people who openly come to you in this way. He knows that you will be on the alert against them. He gives a special warning against some others who would beguile you; that is to say, who will try to turn you out of the right road, but who will not tell you that they mean to do so. They pretend that they are going to show you something that you knew not before, some improvement upon what you have hitherto learned. In Paul's day there were some who took off the attention of the Christian from the worship of God to the worship of angels. "Angels," said they, "these are holy beings; they keep watch over you; you should speak of them with great respect"; and then when they grew bolder, they said, "You should ask their protection"; and then after a little while they said, "You should worship them; you should make them intermediate intercessors"; and so, step by step, they went on and established an old heresy which lasted for many years in the Christian church, and which is not dead even now, and thus the worship of angels crept in.

And nowadays you will meet with men who will say, "That bread upon the Table — why, it represents the body of Jesus Christ to you when you come to the Lord's Supper; therefore, you ought to treat that bread with

great respect." By and bye they will get a little bolder, and then they say, "As it represents Christ, you may worship it, pay it respect as if it were Christ." By and bye it will come to this, that you must have a napkin under your chin, lest you should drop a crumb; or it will be very wicked if a drop of the sacred wine should cling to your moustache when you drink; and there will be the directions which are given in some of the papers coming out from the High Church party — absurdities which are only worthy of the nursery — about the way in which the holy bread is to be eaten, and the holy wine is to be drunk — bringing in idolatry, sheer, clear idolatry, under the pretence of improving upon the too bare simplicity of the worship of Christ. Have a care of the very first step, I pray you.

Or, perhaps, it may come to you in another shape. One will say to you, "The place in which you worship — is it not very dear to you? That seat where you have been accustomed to sit and listen, is it not dear?"; and your natural instincts will say, "Yes." Then it will go a little farther. "That place is holy; it ought never to be used for anything but worship." Then a little farther it will be, "Oh! that is the house of God," and you will come to believe that, contrary to the words which you know are given to you of the Holy Ghost, that God dwells not in temples made with hands; that is to say, in these buildings, and you will get by degrees to have a worship of places, and a worship of days, and a worship of bread, and a worship of wine. And then it will be said to you, "Your minister, has he not often cheered you? Well then, you should reverence him; call him 'Reverend.'" Go a little farther, and you will call him "Father"; yet a little farther, and he will be your confessor; get a little farther and he will be your infallible Pope. It is all step by step it is done. The first step seems to be very harmless indeed. Indeed, it is a kind of voluntary humility. You look as if you were humbling yourselves, and were paying reverence to these things for God's sake, whereas the object is to get you to pay reverence to them, instead of to God, and here the Apostle's words come in, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." They will often attack you in that insidious manner by setting up other objects of reverence besides those which spiritual men worship.

So, too, they will by slow degrees try to insinuate a different way of living from that which is the true life of the Christian. You who have believed in Jesus are saved; your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. You are

accustomed to go to Jesus Christ constantly to receive that washing of the feet of which he spake to Peter when he said, "He that is washed needeth not except to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit." You go to him with "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But there will be some who will come in and tell you that to live in that way by a simple faith in Jesus Christ is not, perhaps, the best way. Could you not get a little farther? Could you not lead the life of those recluses who mortify the flesh in such a way that at last they come to have no sins, but commence to be perfect in themselves? Could you not begin, at least in some degree, to commit your soul's care to some priest, or to some friend, and instead of making every place holy and every day a holy day, would it not be well to fast on such and such days in the week, to scrupulously observe this rule and the other rule, and walk by the general opinion of the ancient Church, or by some one of those books which profess to show how they used to do it a thousand years ago? All this may have a great show of wisdom, and antiquity, and beauty; there may be a semblance of everything that is holy about it, and names that should never be mentioned without reverence may be appended to it all, but listen to the Apostle as he saith, "Beware lest any man beguile you of your reward," for if they get you away from living upon Christ as a poor sinner from day to day by simple confidence in him, they will beguile you of your reward.

There is another party who will seek to beguile you of your reward by bringing in speculative notions, instead of the simple truths of God's Word. There is a certain class of persons who think that a sermon must be a good one when they cannot understand it, and who are always impressed with a man whose words are long; and if his sentences are involved they feel, poor souls, that because they do not know what he is talking about, there is no doubt that he is a very wise and learned man; and after a while when he does propound something that they can catch at, though it may be quite contrary to what they have learned at their mother's knee or from their father's Bible, yet they are ready to be led off by it. There are many men nowadays who seem to spend their time in nothing else but in spinning new theories, and inventing new systems, gutting the gospel, taking the very soul and bowels out of it, and leaving there nothing but the mere skin and outward bones. The life and marrow of the gospel is being taken away by their learning, by their philosophies, by their refinements, by their bringing everything down to the test of this wonderfully

enlightened nineteenth century, to which we are all, I suppose, bound to defer. But a voice comes to us, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." Stand fast to the old truths; they will outlast all these philosophies. Stand fast to the old way of living; it will outlast all the inventions of men. Stand fast by Christ, for you want no other object of worship but himself.

The Apostle gives us this warning, "Let no man beguile you of your reward," reminding us that these persons are very likely to beguile us. They will beguile us by their character. Have I not often heard young people say of such and such a preacher who preaches error, "But he is so good a man." That is nothing to the point. "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." If the life of the man should be blameless as the life of Christ, yet if he preach to you other than the gospel of Jesus Christ, take no heed of him; he weareth but the sheep's clothing, and is a wolf after all. Some will plead, "But such and such a man is so eloquent." Ah! brethren, may the day never come when your faith shall stand in the words of men. What is a ready orator, after all, that he should convince your hearts? Are there not ready orators caught any day for everything? Men speak, speak fluently, and speak well in the cause of evil, and there are some that can speak much more fluently and more eloquently for evil than any of our poor tongues are ever likely to do for the right. But words, words, words, flowers of rhetoric, oratory — are these the things that saved you? Are ye so foolish that having begun in the spirit by being convinced of your sins, having begun by being led simply to Christ, and putting your trust in him — are you now to be led astray by these poetic utterances and flowery periods of men? God forbid! Let nothing of this kind beguile you.

Then there will be added to these remarks that the man is not only very good and very eloquent, but that he is very earnest — he seems very humble-minded. Yes, and of old they wore rough garments to deceive, and in the connection of the text we find that those persons were noted for their voluntary humility and their worship of angels. Satan knows very well that if he comes in black he will be discovered, but if he puts on the garb of an angel of light, then men will think he comes from God, and so will be deceived. "By their fruits ye shall know them." If they give you not the gospel, if they exalt not Christ, if they bear not witness to

salvation through the precious blood, if they do not lift up Jesus Christ as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, have nothing to do with them, speak as they may. “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” Though it should happen to be your relative, one whom you love, one who may have many claims on your respect otherwise — let no man, let no man, however plausible may be his speech, or eminent his character, beguile you of your reward.

Recollect, you professors, you lose the reward if you lose the road to the reward. He that runs may run very fast, but if he does not run in the course, he wins not the prize. You may believe false doctrine with great earnestness, but you will find it false for all that. You may give yourself up indefatigably to the pursuit of the wrong religion, but it will ruin your souls. A notion is abroad that if you are but earnest and sincere, you will be all right. Permit me to remind you that if you travel never so earnestly to the north, you will never reach the south, and if you earnestly take prussic acid you will die, and if you earnestly cut off a limb you will be wounded. You must not only be earnest, but you must be right in it. Hence is it necessary to say, “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” “I bear them witness,” said the Apostle, “that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, but went about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” Oh! may we not be beguiled, then, so as to miss the reward of heaven at the last!

But I must pass on, especially as the light fails us this evening; I hope it is prognostic of a coming shower. Here is a second rendering which may be given to the text: —

II. LET NO MAN DOMINEER OVER YOU.

This rendering, or something analogous to it, is in the French translation. One of the great expositors in his commentary upon this passage refers it to the judges at the end of the course, who sometime would give the reward to the wrong person, and the person who had really run well might thus be deprived of his reward. Now, however close a man may be to Christ, the world, instead of honouring him for it, will, on the contrary, censure and condemn him, and hence the Apostle’s exhortation is, “Let no man domineer over you.”

And, my brethren, I would earnestly ask you to remember this first as to your course of action. If you conscientiously believe that you are right in what you are doing, study very little who is pleased or who is displeased. If you are persuaded in your own soul that what you believe and what you do are acceptable to God, whether they are acceptable to man or not is of very small consequence. You are not man's servant, you do not look to man for your reward, and, therefore, you need not care what man's opinion may be in this matter. Be just and fear not. Tread in the footsteps of Christ, follow what may. Live not on the breath of men. Let not their applause make you feel great, for perhaps then their censure will make you faint. Let no man in this respect domineer over you, but let Christ be your Master, and look to his smile.

So not only with regard to your course of action, but also with reference to your confidence, let no man domineer over you. If you put your trust in Jesus Christ, there are some who will say it is presumption. Let them say it is presumption. "Wisdom is justified of all her children," and so shall faith be. If you take the promise of God and rest upon it, there will be some who will say that you are hare-brained fanatics. Let them say it. They that trust in him shall never be confounded. The result will honour your faith. You have but to wait a little while, and, perhaps, they that now censure you will have to hold up their hands in astonishment, and say with you, "What hath God wrought?" Your confidence in Christ, especially, my dear young friend, I trust does not depend upon the smile of your relatives. If it did, then their frown might crush it. Walk with your Saviour in the lowly walk of holy confidence, and let not your faith rest in man, but in the smile of God.

Let no man domineer over you, again, by judging your motives. Men will always give as bad a reason as they can for a good man's actions. It seems to be innate in human nature never to give a man credit for being right if you can help it, and often tender minds have been greatly wounded when they have been misrepresented, and their actions have been imputed to sinister and selfish motives, when they have really desired to serve Christ. But do not let your heart be broken about that. You will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ: do not care about these petty judgments-seats of men. Go on with your Master's work dauntlessly and fearlessly. Let them say, as David's brethren said of him, "Because of thy pride and the

naughtiness of thy heart to see the battle, art thou come.” Go you and get Goliath’s head, and bring it back, and that shall be the best answer to these sneering ones. When they see that God is with you, and that he has given you the triumph, you shall have honour, even in the eyes of those who now ridicule you. I think sometimes the Christian should have very much the same bravado against the judgment of men as David had when Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out and said, “How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants,” and he said, “It was before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than thus.” Let your eye be to God, and forget the eyes of men. Live so that, whether they know what you do, or do not know, you will not care, for your conduct will bear the blaze of the great Judgment Day, and, therefore, the criticisms of earth do not affect you. Let no man domineer over you.

So may I put it in another light — let no man sway your conscience so as to lead you. I am always anxious, my dear hearers, that, whatever respect I may ever win from you — and I trust I may have your esteem and your affection — yet that you will never believe a doctrine simply because I utter it, but unless I can confirm it from the Word of God, away with it. If it be not according to the teaching of the Lord and Master, I beseech you follow me not. Follow me only as far as I follow Christ. And so with every other man. Let it be God’s truth, God’s Word, the Holy Spirit’s witness to that Word in your soul, that you are seeking after, but rest, I pray you, never short of that, for if you do your faith must stand merely in the wisdom of men, and when the man who helped you to believe is gone, perhaps your faith may be gone too, when most you need its comforting power. No; let no man domineer over you, but press forward in the Christian race, looking unto Jesus, and looking unto Jesus only.

But now a third meaning belongs to the text. A happy circumstance it is, this dark night, that the preacher does not need to use his manuscript, for if he did his sermon must certainly come to an end now. But here is this point, “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” It may mean this: —

III. LET NO MAN ROB YOU OF THE PRESENT REWARD WHICH YOU HAVE IN BEING A CHRISTIAN.

Let no man deprive you of the present comfort which your faith should bring to you. Let me just for a few minutes have your attention while I speak upon this. Dear brethren, you and I, if we are believers in Christ, are this day completely pardoned. There is no sin in God's book against us. We are wholly and completely justified. The righteousness of Jesus Christ covers us from head to foot, and we stand before God as if we had never sinned. Now let no man rob you of this reward. Do not be tempted by anything that is said to doubt the completeness of a believer in Christ. Hold this, and, as you hold it, enjoy it. Do not let the man, yourself, whom you have most to fear, beguile you. Even though conscience should upbraid you, and you should have many grave reasons for doubt, as you imagine, yet if you believe in Jesus, stand to it — "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus; he that believeth on him is not condemned; I have believed, and I am not condemned, neither will he permit condemnation to be thundered against me, for Christ has borne my sin for me, and I am clear in him." Let no man beguile you of the reward of feeling that you are complete in Christ.

Further, you who have believed in Jesus Christ are safe in Christ. Because he lives, you shall live also. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? He has said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Now there are some who will tell you that you are not safe, and that it is dangerous for you to believe that you are. Let no man beguile you of this reward. You are saved. If you are believing on him, he will keep you, and you may sing, "Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding great joy, unto him be glory." Hold to that blessed truth that you are in Jesus — safe in Jesus Christ.

There is a third blessed truth, that not only are you pardoned and safe in Christ, but you are accepted at this moment, in the Beloved. Your acceptance with God does not rest upon anything in you. You are accepted because you are in Christ, accepted for Christ's sake. Now sometimes you will get robbed of this reward if you listen to the voice which says, "Why, there is sin in you still; your prayers are imperfect;

your actions are stained.” Yes, but let no man beguile you of this conviction that, sinner as you are, you are still accepted in Christ Jesus.

The Lord grant that you may feel this within, and let no man beguile you of your reward as long as you live. May you live and die in the enjoyment of it, beloved, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

A NEW CREATION

A Sermon

Published on Thursday, July 15th, 1915.

Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

“He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new.”

— Revelation 21:5

Men generally venerate antiquity. It were hard to say which has the stronger power over the human mind — antiquity or novelty. While men will frequently dote upon the old, they are most easily dazzled by the new. Anything new has at least one attraction. Restless spirits consider that the new must be better than the old. Though often disappointed, they are still ready to be caught by the same bait, and, like the Athenians of Mars Hill, spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. And as for ourselves, dear friends, mournfully as we sometimes think of the flight of time, we are wont cheerfully to look out upon the new epochs as they begin to dawn upon us. If our calendar suggests some dismal memories in the past, our calculation forestalls some happier prospects in the future. And it will sometimes happen that we leave so much anxiety, adversity, and chastisement behind us, that it is a relief to hope that the tide has turned, and that a course of comfort, prosperity, and mercy lies before us. One weeps over the past and the lost. I suppose the best of men must do so at

times. I am sure those of us who are not the best, feel often constrained to pour out some such a lamentation as this: —

“Much of our time has run to waste;
Our sins, how great the sum!
Lord, give us pardon for the past,
And strength for days to come.”

I do not know but it is sometimes as well, when one has been plunged in sorrow, or feels ashamed of his past life — after having regretted that which is bygone and repented of it, and sorrowed over it — to feel as if he breathed another atmosphere, and had started on a fresh career. Having thrown away the old sword, he is now about to see what he can do with the new: having put off an old garment, he is desirous to walk more worthily of his vocation with fresh ones that are provided for him. Perhaps the thought of freshness, the fact of new time having dawned on our path, may be a little help to those of us who are dull and heavy, and we may be stirred up to action, or, if not to action, it may awaken earnest hope that the infusion of a new start into our lives, new vigour instead of the old lethargy, new love instead of the old lukewarmness, new zeal instead of the old deathlikeness; new, pertinacious, persevering industry for Christ, instead of the old idleness, may result. God grant that it may be so!

Looking at the text in this light, I think it speaks to everyone here present — Would you begin anew, lo, there is one who can help you to do so! From the throne where sits the once crucified but now glorified Saviour, there comes a whisper of hope to each and every soul who would be made new, and would begin life anew. “Behold I make all things new.” In trying to bring out the thoughts contained in this exclamation from the throne, from the Emperor of the Universe, from the court of the King of Kings, we shall first speak, very briefly, of the new creation; secondly, we should bid you adore the great Regenerator; and, in the third place, we shall ask you to behold with attention the fact before you, with a view of receiving benefit from it. Observe the text speaks of: —

I. A NEW CREATION.

“I make.” That is a divine word. “I make all things.” That, also, is divine. “I make all things new.” This our Lord Jesus Christ has done upon the

greatest scale. We must view his purpose. It is the purpose and intention of the Lord Jesus to make this world entirely new. You recollect how it was made at first — pure and perfect. It sang with its sister-spheres the song of joy and reverence. It was a fair world, full of everything that was lovely, beautiful, happy, holy. And if we might be permitted to dream for a moment of what it would have been if it had continued as God created it, one might fancy what a blessed world it would be at this moment. Had it possessed a teeming population like its present one, and if, one by one, those godly ones had been caught away, like Elijah, without knowing death, to be succeeded by pious descendants- -oh! what a blessed world it would have been! A world where every man would have been a priest, and every house a temple, and every garment a vestment, and every meal a sacrifice, and every place holiness to the Lord, for the tabernacle of God would have been among them, and God himself would have dwelt among them! What songs would have hailed the rising of the sun — the birds of paradise carolling on every hill and in every dale their Maker's praise! What songs would have ushered in the stillness of the night! Ay, and angels, hovering over this fair world, would oft have heard the strain of joy breaking the silence of midnight, as glad and pure hearts beheld the eyes of the Creator beaming down upon them from the stars which stud the vault of heaven. But there came a serpent, and his craft spoiled it all. He whispered into the ears of a mother Eve; she fell, and we fell with her, and what a world this now is! If a man walks about in it with his eyes open, he will see it to be a horrible sphere. I do not mean that its rivers, its lakes, its valleys, its mountains are repulsive. Nay, it is a world fit for angels, naturally; but it is a horrible world morally. As I walked the other day down the streets of Paris, and saw the soldiers with their pretty dresses, and the knives and forks which they carried with them to carve men and make a meal for death, I could not help thinking — this is a pretty world, this is. Only let one man lift his finger, and a hundred thousand men are ready to meet a hundred thousand other men, all intent upon doing — what? Why, upon cutting each other's throats, upon tearing out each other's bleeding hearts, and wading up to their knees in each other's gore, till the ditches be full of blood, horses and men all mingled, and left to be food for dogs and for carrion crows. And then the victors on either side in the fray, return, and beat the drums, and sound the trumpets, and say, "Glory! glory! see what we have done." Devils could not be worse than

men when their passions are let loose. Dogs would scarce tear each other as men do. Men of intellect sit down, and put their fingers to their foreheads, racking their brains to find out new ways of using gunpowder, and shot, and shell, so as to be able to blow twenty thousand souls into eternity as easily as twenty might be massacred by present appliances. And he is considered a clever man, a patriot, a benefactor of his own nation, who, by dint of genius, can discover some new way of destroying his fellow creatures. Oh! it is a horrible world, appalling to think of. When God looks at it, I wonder he does not stamp it out, just as you and I do a spark of coal that flies upon our carpet from the fire. It is a dreadful world. But Jesus Christ, who knew that we should never make this world much better, let us do what we would with it, designed from the very first to make a new world of it. Truly, truly, this seems to me to be a glorious purpose. To make a world is something wonderful, but to make a world new is something more wonderful still. When God spake and said, "Let there be light," it was a fiat which showed him to be divine. Yet there was nothing then to resist his will; he had no opponent; he could build as he pleased, and there was none to pluck down. But when Jesus Christ comes to make a new world, there is everything opposed to him. When he saith, "Let there be light," darkness saith, "There shall not be light." When he says, "Let there be order," chaos says, "Nay, I will maintain confusion." When he says, "Let there be holiness, let there be love, let there be truth," the principalities and powers of evil withstand him, and say, "There shall not be holiness, there shall be sin; there shall not be love, there shall be hate; there shall not be truth, there shall be error; there shall not be the worship of God, there shall be the worship of stocks and stones; men shall bow down before idols which their own hands have made." And yet, for all that, Jesus Christ, coming in the form of a man, revealing himself as the Son of God, determines to make all things new; and be assured, brethren and sisters, he will do it. What though he pleases to take his time, and to use humble instrumentalities to effect his purposes, yet do it he will. The day shall come when this world shall be as fair as it was at the primeval Sabbath; when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. The ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled to the letter. God shall dwell among men, peace shall be domiciled on earth, and glory shall be ascribed to God in the highest. This great work of Christ, this

grand design of making this old world into a new one, shall be carried into effect.

In order to accomplish this, it hath come to pass that Christ has made for us a new covenant. The old covenant was, "Do this and live." That covenant was a sentence of death upon us all. We could not do, therefore we could not live, and so we died. The new covenant has nothing in it contingent upon creature doing, but it bases all its provisions upon Christ having done the world. "I will, and you shall," this is the language of the new covenant. The covenant of law, in which we were weak through the flesh, left us mangled and broken. The covenant of grace reveals God's kindness towards us, and our part thereof has been fulfilled for us by our surety, Christ Jesus. Thus it runs, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever; a new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." The old world is still under the old covenant of works, and its children perish, for they cannot carry out the conditions of the covenant, they cannot keep God's law, they break it constantly, and they die. But the children of grace are under the new covenant of grace, and through the precious blood, which is the penalty of the old broken covenant, and through the spotless righteousness of Christ, which is the fulfilment and magnifying of the old covenant, the Christian stands secure, and rejoices that he is saved. Christ has thus made his people dwell under a new covenant, instead of under the old one.

In addition to the new covenant, Christ has been pleased to make us new men. His saints are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." They have a new nature. God has breathed into them a new life. The Holy Spirit, though the old nature is still there, has been pleased to put within them a new nature. There is now a contending force within them — the old carnal nature inclining to evil, and the new God-given nature panting after perfection. They are new men, "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This new nature is moved by new principles. The old nature needed to be awed with threatenings, or bribed with rewards; the new nature feels the impulse of love. Gratitude is its mainspring: "We love him because he first loved us." No mercenary motive now stirs the new creature: —

“My God, I love thee not because
 I hope for heaven thereby,
 Nor yet because who love thee not
 Must burn eternally.”

I love thee, O my Saviour, because on the cross thou didst bear shame, and spitting, and manifold disgrace for me. New principles stir the new nature which God has given. And this new nature is conscious of new emotions. It loves what once it hated; it hates what once it loved. It finds blight where once it sought for bliss, and finds bliss where once it found nothing but bitterness. It leaps at the sound which was once dull to its ears — the name of a precious Christ. It rejoices in hopes which once seemed idle as dreams. It is filled with a divine enthusiasm which it once rejected as fanatical. It is conscious now of living in a new element, breathing a fresh air, partaking of new food, drinking out of new wells not digged by men or filled from the earth. The man is new — new in principles, and new in emotions.

And now the man is also new in relationship. He was an heir to wrath; he is now a child of God. He was a bond-slave; he is now a freeman. He was the Ishmael who dwelt in the wilderness; he is now the Isaac, and dwells with Sarah after the tenor of the new covenant. He rejoices in Christ Jesus, and feasts to the full. He was the citizen of earth once; he is now a citizen of heaven. He once found his all beneath the clouds; but now his all is beyond the stars. He has new relationships. Christ is his brother; God is his father; the angels are his friends; and the despised people of God are his best and nearest kinsfolk. And hence the man has new aspirations. He now pants to glorify God. What cared he about the glory of God once? He now pants to see God; once he would have paid the fare, if it had cost his life, that he might escape from the presence of the Lord. Now he hungers and thirsts after the living God; yea, if his soul had wings, and he could break the fetters of this mortality, he would mount at once to dwell where Jesus is. Dear friends, are you new men? If you are, you understand what it is; if you are not, I know I cannot explain it to you. Oh! to be born again is a great mystery; blessed is the soul that comprehends it! But he that knows it not will never learn it by the lip; he can only know it by the Spirit of God causing him also to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Thus far I have said that the object of Christ was to make a new world, and he began by making a new covenant. Then, through his Spirit, he goes on to make new men under the new covenant, and you will see that by this means he makes a new society. Swelling words have been spoken and great attempts taken in hand to renovate society, but you can never renovate society till you have renovated the individual members who compose society. You may build a brick house, if you please; but, build it as you like, it will be a house of brick upon whatever principles of architecture it may be constructed; not until that brick shall be transformed to marble can you hope to “dwell in marble halls.” So men may launch their divers theories, and patent their social inventions, but after they have re-shaped the society of sinners, they will leave it a sinful society still. It is otherwise with Christ. By making new men he makes a new society, which society he calls his “Church”. That Church he sends into the world to act upon the rest of mankind. Verily the day will come — whether it shall be at his second advent or before his second advent, I do not know — the day when from the east to the west, and from the north to the south, there shall be a new world as far as men are concerned. There shall be no injustice towards the poor; there shall be no envying of the rich; there shall be no law to make men slaves; there shall be no power to oppress, because there shall be no will to do it. Our Lord Jesus Christ shall put a new heart into earth’s kings, and then he shall come himself to take their thrones and their crowns, and to be himself our Universal King, and in his day shall the righteous flourish.

Now I believe the way for us to regard that happy day in which he will make all things new; that happy day when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the sword shall be turned into the sickle, and the spear into the pruning hook — the way for us to regard that day, I think, is not standing with our mouths open expecting it, but by setting to work after the Master’s own fashion, seeking to bring it about, to gather out the elect from mankind, to illustrate the gospel practically in our lives, and so to do as Jesus did among the sons of men; promoting light, and peace, and truth, and holiness, and happiness as God may help us.

I wish we had more time to enter fully into this part of the subject. We have not, and, therefore, we must leave it, but may you and I have a part in this new creation! Turning to our second point, I want you to: —

II. ADORE THIS GREAT REGENERATOR.

He says, “Behold I make all things new.” Behold him! He is a man dressed in the common garments of the poor! He hath no form nor comeliness, and when you shall see him there is no beauty in him that you should desire him. He has come to make the world new. He has no soldiery, no book of laws, no new philosophy. He had come to make the world new, and to do this he has brought with him — what? Why, himself. He spends a life of weariness and sorrow amongst those who despise him, and if you want to know first and foremost how he makes all things new, you must see him sweating great drops of blood in the garden — that is the blood of the new world which he is pouring forth! You must see him bound, scourged, spat upon, led to the accursed tree. While God’s wrath for sin is yet unspent, the world cannot be new; but when that wrath on account of sin is all poured upon the head of the great Substitute, then the world stands in a new relation to God, and it can be a new world. See the Saviour then, in groans and pangs which cannot be described, bearing the curse of God, for he made him to be sin for us, though he knew no sin. The curse fell on him, as it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; he hath made his soul to be an offering for sin.” That dolorous pain, then, of the Master was the world’s new-making. It was then and there that the world was born again. No mother’s pangs, when she brought forth a man-child, were such as those of Christ when he brought forth the new creation. It was there in the travail of his soul — did you ever catch that idea, the travail of his soul? — it was there that the new world was born! “Behold I make all things new” is a mysterious voice from the broken heart of a dying Saviour. From the empty tomb, as he rises, I hear it come in silvery notes, “Behold I make all things new.” You must trace the birth of the new creation up to the grave of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the place where the cross stood, and where his body lay.

But the actual operations of new-making the world takes place through the truth which Christ promulgated. After the relation of the world to God had been changed by the sufferings of Jesus, the world’s thought concerning

God came to be changed by the preaching of Jesus. He came and revealed God to man as man had never seen God before. It was through him we learned that “God is love.” It was through him that we understood that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It is the preaching of the cross of Jesus that is to make the world new. It is not the philosophies of men, but the wisdom of God which effects the change. In the presence of Christ your philosophies must sink into darkness as stars in the presence of the sun.

And it is also by the giving of the Holy Ghost, as the result of the ascension of Christ on high, that the world is made new. Thus he gives power to the ministry. There were three thousand new creations in one day when Peter preached the gospel under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And that blessed Spirit of God is here tonight. Oh! I would that there might be some new creations tonight, that that divine heavenly Spirit would come into some of your souls, and drop there that vital spark of heavenly flame which shall never be quenched, but shall burn brightly in heaven for ever. Wherever the gospel is preached, the Spirit is present in that gospel, and he gives faith to men, gives life to men, and so they are made new, and the new-making thus goes on.

I have not time — though thoughts crowd into my mind — to speak about the way in which Christ thus new-makes the world. It is quite certain that three parts of his history are connected with it. I have only referred to his death, his burial, and his resurrection, but I might go on to speak of his constant and prevalent intercessions, for his pleading before the throne is also a part of the mighty operation; nor can I doubt but that his Second Advent will be the bringing out of the topstone with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it!” Then shall be fulfilled — finally and exhaustively fulfilled — the saying that is written, “Behold I make all things new.” The text begins with “Behold!” and I am going to close with that same note of admiration. I want you to: —

III. BEHOLD AND TO BELIEVE.

Behold, the Lord Jesus is now enthroned in heaven. He it is who makes all things new. Is not this what some of you here present deeply need? If you look within, yourselves will see much to disgust and alarm you.

Peradventure, you dare not take stock of yourselves now; you dare not consider where you are, nor what you are, nor whither you are bound. "To speak candidly," you say, "I want reforming." Very likely, but you want a great deal more than mere reformation. I have heard of a being who used habitually to swear, "God mend me!" Somebody said, "Better make a new one." That is the case with full many of you. You are saying, "Well, I will turn over a new leaf." You had better shut the book up altogether, and never turn over any more leaves, for all the pages are alike bad. "Oh! well," says one, "I shall try if I cannot alter." I wish you would try God's altering of you, instead of altering yourselves. "Well, but surely, surely, I may wash and be clean; I will try to make myself as clean as possible?" Yes, yes, that is all very well; but what if you have a corpse in the house? I would have you make it clean, yet that will not make it live. However much you may wash it, it is corrupt still. You may reform yourselves as much as ever you please, all your reformation will be futile; you need more, a great deal more than that. The fact is, you must be made new. Nothing less will do; you must be made new; you must be born again. "Ah!" says one, "if I could be made new, there might be a chance for me." Well now, Christ looks down from this throne in heaven, and he says, "Behold I will make all things new." "Yes," you say, "but he will not make me new." Why not? Does he not say, "I make all things new"? "But my heart is as hard as a rock," say you. Well, but he says, "I will make all things new," so he can give you a new heart. "Oh! but I am so very stubborn. Aye, aye, but he makes all things new, and he can make you as tender and sensitive as a little child. Oftentimes a grey-headed sinner has looked back to his childhood, and remembered the time when he used to sing his little hymn at his mother's knee, and he has said, 'Ah! I have been in many strange places since then, and my heart has got seared and hard; I wish I could get back to what I was then!'" Well, you can, you can. Christ can bring you there. Nay, he can bring you to something better than you ever were when those golden ringlets hung so plentifully about that pretty little head of yours, for you were not so innocent then as you now think you were. Christ can make you really pure in heart; he can make you a new creature, so that you shall be converted and become as a little child. "Oh!" say you, "how can I get it? How can I prepare myself for him?" You do not want to prepare yourself for him. God to him just as you are; trust him to do it, and he will do it. That is faith, you know — trust,

dependence. Canst thou believe that Christ can save thee? Oh! thou canst believe that; well now, wilt thou trust him to save thee? Wilt thou trust him to deliver thee from thy drunkenness, from thine angry temper, thy pride, thy love of self, thy lusts? Dost thou desire to be a new creature in Christ Jesus? If so, that very desire must have come from heaven. I could fain hope that he has already begun the good work in you, and he that begins it will carry it on. Do not be afraid, however bad thy character, or however vicious thy disposition. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new." What a wonder it is that a man should ever have a new heart! You know if a lobster loses its claw in a fight it can get a new claw, and that is thought to be very marvellous. It would be very wonderful if men should be able to grow new arms and new legs, but who ever heard of a creature who grew a new heart? You may have seen a bough lopped off a tree, and you may have thought that, perhaps, the tree will sprout again, and there will be a new limb, but who ever heard of old trees getting new sap and a new core? But my Lord and Master, the crucified and exalted Saviour, has given new hearts and new cores; he has put the vital substance into man afresh, and made new creatures of them. I am glad to notice the tear in your eye, when you think on the past, but wipe it away now, and look up to the cross and say: —

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb, O God, I come."

"Oh! make me a new creature!" If you have said that from your heart, you are a new creature, dear brother, and we will rejoice together in this regenerating Saviour.

Let me just say a few words to those of you who love the Lord. You may have some very bad children, or you have some relatives who are going on in sin from bad to worse. I earnestly recommend you attentively to consider my text. "Behold," says Christ, "I make all things new." "No, no," says the old father, "I used to pray for my boy; he broke my heart; he brought his mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; but he has gone away, and I have not heard of him for years, and I am almost afraid to wish I ever may hear of him again, for he did seem so reckless, that my only comfort is in trying to forget him." "Yes," says a husband here, "I have

prayed for my wife o many times, that I do feel tempted to give it up; it is not likely that I shall ever live to see her saved." Oh! but, brethren and sisters, we do not know; since the Lord saved us, there cannot be any limits as to what he can do. Look at the text, "Behold I make all things new." I will pray, "Lord, make my children new." You shall pray, "Lord, make my wife new." You godly wives, who have ungodly husbands, you shall pray, "Lord, make our husbands new." You who have dear friends who lie upon your bosom, as you anxiously think of them, pray the Lord Jesus to make them new. When our friends are made new, oh! what a great comfort they are; just as much so as they formerly were a sorrow. The greater the sinner, the greater the joy to loving believers when they see him saved. "Behold," says Christ — I do like that word — "Behold it! Stand and look at it! See how I took the man when he was up to his neck in sin, and made him preach the gospel. Can I not do the same again? Look there and see the dying thief upon the cross, black with a thousand crimes: I washed him and took him to Paradise the same day; what can I not do? Behold I make all things new." Courage, my brethren and sisters. We will not entertain any more doubt about Christ's power to save. Rather, by God's grace, may we henceforth believe more in him, and, according to our faith, so shall it be done unto us. If we can only trust him for those of our friends whose faults seem to us few and light, our little trust will reap little reward; but if we can go with strong faith in a great God, and bring great sinners in our arms, and put them down before this mighty Regenerator of men, and say, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make them new"; and if we will never cease the pleading till we get the blessing, then we shall see ever-accumulating illustrations of the fact that Jesus makes all things new; and calling up the witnesses of his redeeming power, we shall cry in the ears of a drowsy Church and an incredulous world, "Behold, behold, behold! He makes all things new." The Lord give us eyes to see it. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

GO BACK? NEVER!

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Thursday Evening, July 13th, 1871.

“And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly...city.”

— Hebrews 11:15, 16

Abraham left his country at God’s command, and he never went back again. The proof of faith lies in perseverance. There is a sort of faith which doth run well for a while, but it is soon ended, and it doth not obey the truth. The Apostle tells us, however, that the people of God were not forced to continue, because they could not return. Had they been mindful of the place from whence they came out, they might have found opportunities to return. Frequent opportunities came in their way. There was communication kept up between them and the old family house at Padan-Aram. They had news concerning the family house. More than that, there were messages exchanged; servants were sometimes sent. There was also a natural relationship kept up. Did not Rebekah come from thence? And Jacob, one of the patriarchs, was driven to go down into the land; but he could not stay there; he was always unrestful, until at last he stole a march upon Laban and came back to the proper life, the life that he

had chosen — the life that God had commanded him to live — of a pilgrim and stranger in the land of promise. You see, then, they had many opportunities to have returned, to have settled down comfortably and tilled the ground which their fathers did before them; but they continued to follow the uncomfortable life of wanderers of the weary foot, who dwell in tents, who own no plot of land. They were aliens in the country which God had given them by promise.

Now our position is a very similar one. As many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus have been called out. The very meaning of a church is called out — by Christ; we have been separated. I trust we know what it is to have gone without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. Henceforth in this world we have no home, no true abiding home for our spirits. Our home is beyond the flood. We are looking for it among the unseen things. We are strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were; dwellers in this wilderness, passing through it to reach the Canaan which is to be the land of our perpetual inheritance. I shall this evening first speak to you upon:

I. THE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH WE HAVE HAD, AND STILL HAVE, TO RETURN to the old house if we were mindful of it. Indeed, in the text it seems to me as if the word "opportunities" were not in our case nearly strong enough. It is a wonder of wonders that we have not gone back to the world, and to our own sin. When I think of the strength of divine grace, I do not marvel that saints should persevere, but when I remember the weakness of their nature, it seems a miracle of miracles that there should be one Christian in the world a single hour. It is nothing short of Godhead's utmost stretch of might that preserves a Christian from going back to his old unregenerate condition. We have had opportunities to have returned. My brethren, we have such opportunities in our daily calling. Some of you are engaged in the midst of ungodly men. You have opportunities to sin as they do, to fall into their excess, into their forgetfulness of God, or even into their blasphemies. Oh! have you not often strong inducements, if it were not for the grace of God, to become as they are. Or if your occupation keeps you alone, yet, my brethren, there is one who is pretty sure to keep us company and to seek our mischief — the destroyer, the tempter. And how frequently will even solitude have temptations as severe as publicity could possibly bring! There are snares

in company, but there are snares in our loneliness. We have many opportunities to return. In the parlour — in conversation, perhaps, in the kitchen about the day's work — or in the field, or on the mart, on land, and on sea. Where can we go to escape from these opportunities to return? If we should mount upon the wings of the wind, could we find “a lodge in some vast wilderness” where we could be quite clear from all the opportunities to go back to the old sins in which we once indulged? No; each man's calling may seem to him to be more full of temptation than his fellows, but it is not so. Our temptations are pretty equally distributed, I dare say, after all. And all of us might say that we find in our avocations from hour to hour many opportunities to return.

But, dear brethren, it is not merely in our business and in our calling — the mischief lies in our bones and in our flesh. Opportunities to return in our own nature. Ah! who that knows himself does not find strong incentives to return? Ah! how often will our imagination paint sin in very glowing colours, and though we loathe the sin and loathe ourselves for thinking of it, yet how many a man might say, “Had it not been for divine grace, my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped.” How strong is the evil in the best man, how stern is the conflict to keep under the body, lest corruption should prevail! You may be diligent in secret prayer, and perhaps the devil may have been asleep till you begin to pray, and when you are most fervent then will he also become most rampant. When you get nearest to God, Satan will sometimes seem to get nearer to you. Opportunities to return as long as you are in this body will be with you to the very edge of Jordan. You will meet with temptations when you sit gasping on the banks of the last river, waiting for the summons to cross; it may be that your fiercest temptation may come even then. Oh! this flesh, this body of this death — wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from it? But while it continues with me I shall find opportunities to return.

And, dear brethren and sisters, these opportunities to return are prepared for us in any condition of life and any change through which we may pass. For instance, how often have professors, when they have prospered, found opportunities to return? I sigh to think of how many that appeared very earnest Christians when they were struggling for bread have become very dull and cold now that they have become rich. How often does it happen that the poor earnest Christian has associated with the people of

God at all meetings, and felt proud to be there, but when he has risen in the world and stood an inch or two above others in common esteem, he could not go with God's people any longer. He must seek out the world's fashionable church and join in it to get a share of the respectability and prestige that will always gather there, and he has turned aside from the faith — if not altogether, in his heart at least, in the defence of it in his life. Beware of the high places: they are very slippery. There is not all the enjoyment that you may think to be gathered in retirement and in ease, but, on the contrary, luxury often puffeth up, and abundance makes the heart to swell with vanity. If any of you are prospered in this world, oh! watch, lest ye be mindful to return to the place whence you came out.

But it is just the same with adversity. Alas! I have had to mourn over Christian men — at least I thought they were — who have grown very poor, and when they have grown poor they hardly felt they could associate with those whom they knew in better circumstances. I think they were mistaken in the notion that they would be despised. I should be ashamed of the Christian who would despise his fellow because God was dealing with him somewhat severely in providence, yet there is that feeling in the human heart, and though there may be no unkind treatment, yet often times the spirit is apt to imagine it, and I have known some absent themselves by degrees from the assembly of God. It is smoothing the way to return to your old places. And, indeed, I have not wondered when I have seen some professors grow cold when I have thought how they were compelled to live. Perhaps they lived in a comfortable home before, and now they have to take a room where there is no comfort, and where sounds of blasphemy meet them. Or in some cases, perhaps, they have to go to the workhouse, and be far away from all Christian intercourse or anything that could comfort them. It is only grace that can keep grace alive under such circumstances. You see, then, whether you grow rich, or whether you become poor, you will have these opportunities to return. If you want to go back to sin, to carnality, to a love of the world, to your old condition, you never need to be prevented from doing so by want of opportunities. It will be something else that will prevent you, for these opportunities are plentiful indeed.

Opportunities to return — let me say just this much more about them — are often furnished by the example of others.

“When any turn from Zion’s way,
 Alas! what numbers do!
 Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
 Wilt thou forsake me too?”

Departures from the faith of those whom we highly esteem are, at least while we are young, very severe trials to us. We cannot think that religion can be true if such a man is a hypocrite. It staggers us: we cannot make it out. Opportunities to return you have now, but ah! may grace be given you so that if others play the Judas, instead of leading you to do the same, it may only bind you more fast to your Lord, and make you walk more carefully, lest you also prove a son of perdition.

And oh! my brethren and sisters, if some of us wished to return, we should have this opportunity to return in a certain sense. We should find that none of our old friends would refuse to receive us. There is many a Christian who, if he were to go back to the gaiety of the world, would find the world receive him with open arms. He was the favourite of the ballroom once; he was the wit that set the table on a roar; he was the man who, above all, was courted when he moved in the circle of the vain and frivolous; glad enough would they be to see him come back. What shouts of triumph would they raise, and how would they welcome him! Oh! may the day never come to you, you young people especially, who have lately put on the Lord Jesus Christ and professed his name, when you shall be welcomed by the world; but may you for ever forget also your own kindred and your father’s house, so shall the king greatly desire your beauty, for he is your Lord, and worship you him. Separation from the world shall endear you to the Saviour, and bring you conscious enjoyment of his presence; but opportunities to return I have shown you now are plentiful enough.

Perhaps you will say, “Why does the Lord make them so plentiful? Could he not have kept us from temptation?” There is no doubt he could, but it never was the Master’s intention that we should all be hothouse plants. He taught us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” but at the same time he does lead us there, and intends to do it; and this is for the proving of our faith to see whether it be true faith or not. Only he bids us also pray, “Deliver us from evil.” Depend upon it, faith that is never tried is not faith. It must be sooner or later exercised. God does not create useless

things. He intends that the faith which he gives should have its test, and should glorify his name. These opportunities to return are meant to try your faith, and they are sent to you to prove that you are a volunteer soldier. Why, if grace was a sort of chain that manacled you so that you could not leave your Lord, if it had become a physical impossibility for you to forsake your Saviour, there would be no credit in your abiding faithful to him. He that does not run away because his legs are weak, does not prove himself a hero, but he that could run, but won't run, that could desert his Lord, but won't desert him, has within him a principle of grace stronger than any fetter could be — the highest, strongest, noblest bond that unites a man to the Saviour. By this you shall know whether you are Christ's or not when you have opportunity to return — if you don't return, that shall prove you are his. Two men are going along a road, and they have got a dog behind them. I do not know to whom that dog belongs, but I'll tell you directly. They are coming to a cross road. One goes to the right, and other goes to the left. Now which man does the dog follow? That is his master. Now when Christ and the world go together, you cannot tell which a man is following; but when there is a separation, and Christ goes one way, and your interest, your pleasure seems to go the other way, if you can part with the world, and keep with Christ, then you are one of his. So that these opportunities to return may serve us a good purpose by trying our faith, and helping us to see whether we are, indeed, the Lord's or no. But we must pass on (for we have a very wealthy text tonight) to notice the second point.

II. WE CANNOT TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO BACK BECAUSE WE DESIRE SOMETHING BETTER than we could get by going back. An insatiable desire has been implanted in us by divine grace, which urges us to: —

“Forget the steps already trod,
And onward press our way.”

Notice how the text puts it, “But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly.” Brethren, we desire something better than this world. Do you not? Has the world ever satisfied you? Perhaps it did when you were dead in sin. A dead world may satisfy a dead heart, but ever since you have known something of better things have you ever been contented with the world? Perhaps you have tried to fill your soul with worldly things. God

has prospered you, and you have said, “Oh! this is well!” Your children have been about you; you have had many household joys, and you have said, “I could stay here for ever.” Did not you find very soon that there was a thorn in the flesh? Did you ever get a rose in this world that was altogether without a thorn? Have you not been obliged to say, after you have had all that the world could give you, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”? I am sure it has been so with you. All God’s saints will confess that if the Lord were to say to them, “You shall have all the world, and that shall be your portion,” they would be broken-hearted men. “Nay, my Lord,” they would say, “don’t put me off so, don’t give me these husks, though thou give mountains of them. Thou art more glorious than all the mountains of praise. Give me thyself, and take these all away if it so please thee, but don’t my Lord, don’t think I can fill myself with these things.” We desire something better.

Notice, next, that there is this about a Christian, that even when he does not enjoy something better, he desires it. How much of character is revealed in our desires. I felt greatly encouraged when I read this, “Now they desire a better” — the word “country” has been inserted by our translators — they desire something better. I know I do. I do not always enjoy something better. Dark is my path. I cannot see my Lord, I cannot enjoy his presence, and though it may be a little thing to desire, let me say a good desire is more than nature ever grew. Grace has given it. It is a great thing to be desirous. They desire a better country. And because we desire this better thing, we cannot go back and be content with things which gratified us once.

More than that, if ever the child of God gets entangled, for a while he is uneasy in it. Abraham’s slips — for he made one or two — were made when he had left the land and gone down among the Philistines. But he was not easy there; he must come back again. And Jacob, he had found a wife, nay, two, in Laban’s land, but he was not content. No; no child of God can be. Whatever we may find in this world, we shall never find a heaven here. We may hunt the world through, and say, ‘This looks like a little paradise,’ but there is no paradise this side of the skies — for a child of God at any rate. There is enough out there in the farmyard for the hogs, but there is not for the children. There is enough in the world for sinners, but there is not for saints. They have stronger, sharper, and more

vehement desires, for they have a nobler life within them, and they desire a better country; and even if they get entangled for a while in this country, and in a certain measure become citizens of it, they are still uneasy; their citizenship is in heaven, and they cannot rest anywhere but there. After all, we confess tonight, and rejoice in the confessions, that our best hopes are for things that are out of sight. Our expectations are our largest possessions. The things that we have, that we value, are ours today by faith. We don't enjoy them yet, but when our heirship shall be fully manifested, and we shall come to the full ripe age, oh! then we shall come into our wealth, to the mansions and to the glory and to the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. So, then, you see the reason why the Christian cannot go back, though he has many opportunities, lies in this, that through divine grace he has had produced in his heart desires for something better, and even when he does not as yet enjoy that something better, the desires themselves become mighty bonds that keep him from returning to what he was. Dear brethren, cultivate these desires more and more. If they have such a separating effect upon our character in keeping us from the world, let us cultivate them much. Do you think that we meditate enough upon heaven? Look at the miser. When does he forget his gold? He dreams of it. He has locked it up tonight, and he goes to bed, but he is afraid he heard a footstep downstairs, and he goes to see. He looks to that iron safe to be quite sure that it is well secured — he cannot forget his dear gold. Let us think of heaven, of Christ, of all the blessings of the covenant, and let us thus keep our desires wide awake. The more they draw us to heaven the more we shall be separated from earth. But I must close with the sweetest part of the text.

III. WE HAVE FOR THIS REASON GREAT BLESSEDNESS.

“Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.” Because they are strangers, and because they will not go back to their old abode, therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. He might be. What poor people God's people are — poor many of them in circumstances, but how many of them I might very well call poor as to spiritual things! I do not think if any of us had such a family as God has we should ever have patience with them. We cannot even have, when we judge ourselves rightly, patience with ourselves; but how is it that God bears with the ill-manners of such a froward, weak,

foolish, forgetful people as his people are? He might well be ashamed to be called their God if you look upon them as they are. Own them — how can he own them? Does he not himself sometimes say of them, “How can I put thee among the children?” and yet he does. Viewed as they are, they are such a rabble in many respects that it is marvellous he is not ashamed of them; and yet he never is; and to prove that he is not ashamed of them we have this fact, that he calls himself their God, “I will be your God,” and he oftentimes seems to speak of it as a very joyful thing to his own heart. “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” and while he calls himself their God he never forbids them to call him their God; and in the presence of the great ones of the earth they may call him their God — anywhere. He is not ashamed that it should be so. We have sometimes heard of a brother who has become great and rich in the world, and he has had some poor brother or some distant relative, and when he has seen him in the street he has been obliged just to speak to him and own him; but I dare say he wished him a long way off, especially if some rich acquaintance happened to be with him who should say, “Why, Smith, who was that wretched seedy-looking fellow that you spoke to?” He does not like to say, “That is my relation,” or “That is my brother.” But we find that Jesus Christ, however low his people may sink, and however poor they may be, is not ashamed to call them brethren, nor to let them look up to him in all the depths of their degradation and call him “brother born for adversity.” He is not ashamed to call them brethren. And one reason seems to me to be because he does not judge them by what they are, but by what he has prepared for them. Notice the text, “Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them — he hath prepared for them a city.” They are poor now, but God, to whom things to come are things present, sees them in their fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. All you can see in the poor child of God is a hard-working, labouring man, who is mocked at and despised, but what does God see in him? He sees in him a dignity and a glory second only to himself. He hath put all things under the foot of such a man as that, and crowned him with glory and honour in the person of Christ, and the angels themselves are ministering servants to such a one as that. You see his clothes, you see not him; you see but his earthly tabernacle, but the Spirit, twice born immortal and divine, you see not that. God does. Or if you spiritually perceive that part, you see it as it is, but God sees it as it will

be when it shall be like unto Christ, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. God sees the poorest child of God as he will be in that day when he shall be like Christ, for he shall see him as he is. It seems in the text that God looks to what he has prepared for these poor people — “he hath prepared for them a city.” And methinks that by what he has prepared for them he esteems them and loves them; esteeming them by what he means them to be rather than by what they appear to be.

Now let us look at this preparation just a minute; “he hath prepared for them” — them. I delight to preach a free gospel, and to preach it to every creature under heaven; but we must never forget the speciality — “he hath prepared for them a city.” That is, for such as are strangers and foreigners, for such as have faith, and therefore have left the world and gone out to follow Christ. He hath prepared for them, not for all of you, but only for such as he has prepared for the city, has he prepared the city. But note what it is. It is a city, which indicates, first, an abiding happiness. They dwelt in tents — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but he has prepared for them a city. Here we are tent-dwellers, but the tent is soon to be taken down. “We know that this earthly house of our tent shall be dissolved, but we have a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.” “He hath prepared for them a city.” A city is a place of social joy. In a lonely hamlet one has little company, but in a city much. There all the inhabitants shall be united in one glorious brotherhood — the true Communism; Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, in the highest possible degree. There shall be delightful intercourse. “He hath prepared for them a city.” It is a city, too, for dignity. To be a burgess of the City of London is thought to be a great honour, and upon princes is it sometimes conferred; but we shall have the highest honour that can be given when we shall be citizens of the city which God has prepared.

But I must not dwell on this, delightful theme as it is, for I must close by noticing you, who are the children of God. Don’t wonder, don’t wonder if you have discomforts here. If you are what you profess to be, you are strangers. Don’t expect the men of this world to treat you as one of themselves — if they do, be afraid. Dogs don’t bark when a man goes by that they know — they bark at strangers. When people slander and persecute you no longer, be afraid. If you are a stranger, they naturally bark at you. Don’t expect to find comforts in this world that your flesh

would long for. This is our inn, not our home. We tarry here a night; we are away in the morning. We may bear the discomforts of the eventide and the night, for the morning will break so soon. Remember that your greatest joy while you are a pilgrim is your God. So the text says, “Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.” Do you want a greater source of consolation than you have got? Here is one that can never be diminished, much less exhausted. When the creature streams are dry, go to this eternal fountain, and you will find it ever springing up. Your God is your true joy: make your joy to be in your God.

Now what shall be said to those who are not strangers and foreigners? Oh! you dwell in a land where you find some sort of repose, but I have heavy tidings for you. This land in which you dwell, and all the works thereof, must be burned up. The city of which you, who have never been converted to Christ, are citizens, is the City of Destruction, and as is its name such shall be its end. The king will send his armies against that wicked city and destroy it, and if you are citizens of it you will lose all you have — you will lose your souls, you will lose yourselves. “Whither away?” saith one. “Where can I find comfort then, and security?” You must do as Lot did when the angels pressed him and said, “Haste to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” The mountain of safety is Calvary. Where Jesus died, there you shall live. There is death everywhere else, but there is life in his death. Oh! fly to him! “But how?” saith one. Trust him. God gave his Son, equal with himself, to bear the burdens of human sin, and he died a substitute for sinners, a real substitute, an efficient substitute for all who trust in him. If thou wilt trust thy soul with Jesus, thou art saved. Thy sin was laid on him. It is forgiven thee. It was blotted out when he nailed the handwriting of ordinances to his cross. Trust him now and ye are saved. That is, you shall henceforth become a stranger and a pilgrim, and in the better land you shall find the rest which you never shall find here, and need not wish to find, for the land is polluted. Let us away from it. The curse has fallen. Let us get away to the uncursed and ever blessed, where Jesus Christ dwells for ever. God add his blessing on these words for Christ’s sake. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

FRAGRANT GRACES

A Sermon

Published on Thursday, October 7th, 1915.

Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

“While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”

—Song of Solomon 1:12 (or Canticles)

This passage may be read in several ways. Literally, when Christ tabled among men, when he did eat and drink with them, being found in fashion as a man, the loving spirit broke the alabaster box of precious ointment on his head while the king was sitting at his table. Three times did the Church thus anoint her Lord, once his head and twice his feet, as if she remembered his threefold office, and the threefold anointing which he had received of God the Father to confirm and strengthen him. So she rendered him the threefold anointing of her grateful love, breaking the alabaster box, and pouring the precious ointment upon his head and upon his feet. Beloved, let us imitate the example of those who have gone before. What! though we cannot, as the weeping penitent, wash his feet with our tears, and wipe them with the hairs of our head, like that gracious woman, we may reckon nothing, of fair adornments, or fond endowments, if we can but serve his cause or honour his person. Let us be willing to “pour contempt on all our pride,” and “nail our glory to his cross.” Have you anything tonight that is dear to you? Resign it to him. Have you any costly thing like an alabaster box hidden away? Give it to

the King; he is worthy, and when you have fellowship with him at his table, let your gifts be brought forth. Offer unto the King thanksgiving, and pay your vows unto the Most High.

But the King is gone from earth. He is seated at his table in heaven, eating bread in the kingdom of God. Surrounded now not by publicans and harlots, but by cherubim and seraphim, not by mocking crowds, but by adoring hosts, the King sits at his table, and entertains the glorious company of the faithful, the Church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. He fought before he could rest. On earth he struggled with his enemies, and it was not till he had triumphed over all, that he sat down at the table on high. There sit, thou King of kings, there sit until thy last enemy shall be made thy footstool. What can we do, brethren, while Christ sits at the table above? These hands cannot reach him; these eyes cannot see him; but our prayers, like sweet perfume, set burning here on earth, can rise in smoke to the place where the King sitteth at his table, and our spikenard can diffuse a perfume even in heaven itself. Do you want to reach Christ? Your prayers can do it. Would you now adore him; would you now set forth your love? With mingled prayer and praise, like the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, your incense can come up acceptably before the Lord.

And, brethren, the day is coming when the King shall sit at this table in royal state. Lo, he cometh! Lo, he cometh. Let the Church never forget that. The first advent is her faith; the second advent is her hope. The first advent with the cross lays the foundation; the second advent with the crown brings forth the topstone. The former was ushered in with sighs; the latter shall be hailed with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it.” And when the King, manifested and recognized in his sovereignty over all lands, shall sit at his table with his Church, then, in that blessed Millennium, the graces of Christians shall give forth their odours of sweet savour.

We have thus read the text in three ways, and there is a volume in each; but we turn over another page, for we want to read it in relation to the spiritual presence of Christ as he doth now reveal himself to his people. “When the King sitteth at his table” — that is, when we enjoy the presence of Christ — “my spikenard giveth forth the smell thereof.” Then our graces are in active exercise, and yield a perfume agreeable to our own soul and acceptable before God.

In the train of reflection I shall now attempt to follow, my manner must be hurried; and should it seem feeble, brethren, I cannot help it. If you get fellowship with Christ, I care little for the merits of my sermon, or the perils of your criticism. One thing alone I crave, "Let him kiss us with the kisses of his mouth"; then shall my soul be well content, and so will yours be also. The first observation we make shall be this: —

I. EVERY BELIEVER HAS GRACE IN POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES.

The text implies that when the King is not present the spikenard yields no smell, but the spikenard is there for all that. The spouse speaks of her spikenard as though she had it, and only wanted to have the King come and sit at the table to make its presence known and felt. Ah! well, believer, there is grace in thy heart, if thou be a child of God, when thou canst not see it thyself; when thy doubts have so covered up all thy hopes, that thou sayest, "I am cast out from his presence"; yet for all that, grace may be there. When the old oak has lost its last leaf by the howling blasts of winter; when the sap is frozen up in the veins, and you cannot, though you search to the uttermost bough, find so much as the slightest sign of verdant existence, still even then the substance is in the tree when it has lost its leaves. And so with every believer, though his sap seems frozen, and his life almost dead, yet if once planted, it is there; the eternal life is there when he cannot discover it himself. Do you know — if not, I pray you may never know experimentally — that there are many things that keep a Christian's spikenard from being poured out. Alas! there is our sin. Ah! shameful, cruel sin! to rob my Master of his glory! But when we fall into sin, of course, our graces become weak and yield no fragrance to God. And too, there is our unbelief, which puts a heavy stone on all our graces, and blows out the heat which was burning the frankincense, so that no altar-smoke arises towards heaven. And often, it may be, it is our bitterness of spirit, for when our mind is cast down we hang our harps upon the willows, so that they give forth no sweet music unto God. And, above all, if Christ be absent, if through neglect or by any other means our fellowship with him is suspended, grace is there — but oh! it cannot be seen. There is no comfort springing from it. But, beloved, though we mention this to begin with, we rather choose to pass on and observe that:

II. GRACE IS NOT GIVEN TO A CHRISTIAN TO BE THUS HIDDEN, BUT IT IS INTENDED THAT, LIKE SPIKENARD, IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE IN EXERCISE.

If I understand a Christian aright, he should be a man readily discerned. You do not need to write upon a box that contains spikenard, with the lid open, the word “Spikenard.” You will know it is there; your nostrils would tell you. If a man should fill his pockets with dust, he might walk where he would, and though he should scatter it in the air, few would notice it; but let him go into a room with his pockets full of musk, and let him drop a particle about, he is soon discovered, because the musk speaks for itself. Now true grace, like spikenard or any other perfume, should speak for itself. You know our Saviour compares Christians to lights. There is a crowd of people standing yonder; I cannot see those who are in the shadow, but there is one man whose face I can see well, and that is the man who holds the torch. Its flames light up his face, so that we can catch every feature readily. So, whoever is not discovered, the Christian should be obvious at once. “Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy speech betrayeth thee.” Not only should the Christian be perceptible, but grace has been given to him that it might be in exercise. What is faith, unless it is believing? What is love, unless it is embracing? What is patience, unless it is enduring? To what purpose is knowledge, unless it is revealing truth? What are any of those sweet graces which the Master gives us, unless they yield their perfume? I fear we do not enough gaze upon that face covered with the bloody sweat, for if we did, as sure as the King was thus in our thoughts sitting at his table, we should be more like him; we should love him better; we should live more passionately for him, and should spend and be spent, that we might promote his glory. I just note this point, and then pass on, that believers’ graces, like spikenard, are meant to give forth their smell. But here is the pith of our whole subject, though we have little time to linger upon it: —

III. THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH A CHRISTIAN’S GRACES CAN BE PUT INTO EXERCISE IS THAT HE MUST HAVE THE PRESENCE OF THE MASTER.

He is called “the King.” I am told that the Hebrew word is very emphatic, as if it said, “The King” — the King of kings, the greatest of all Kings. He must be such to us — absolute Master of our hearts, Lord of our soul’s

domain, the unrivalled One in our estimation, to whom we render obedience with alacrity. We must have him as King, or we shall not have his presence to revive our graces. And when the King communes with his people, it is said to be at “his table,” not at ours. Specially may this apply to the table of communion. It is not the Baptists’ table; it is not my table; it is his table, because if there is anything good on it, remember, he spread it; nay, there is nothing on the table unless he himself be there. There is no food to the child of God unless Christ’s body be the flesh, and Christ’s blood the wine. We must have Christ. It must be emphatically his table by his being present, by his spreading it, his presiding at it, or else we have not his presence at all. I find the Hebrew word here signifies a “round table.” I do not know whether that is intended which I understand by it — perhaps it is — it suggests to me a blessed equality with all his disciples; sitting at his round table, as if there were scarce a head, but he was one of themselves, so close the communion he holds with them sitting at the table; so dear his fellowship, sitting like one of themselves, made like unto his brethren in all things at his round table.

Well, now, we say that when Christ comes into the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, or any other ordinance, straightway our graces are vigorous. How often have we resolved that we would live nearer to Christ! Yet, though awe have resolved, and re-resolved, I fear it has all ended with resolving. Peradventure we have prayed over our resolutions, and for a little season we have sought it very earnestly, but our earnestness soon expired, like every other fire that is of human kindling, and we made but little progress. Be not disheartened, my beloved in the Lord: I tell thee, whether thou art able to believe it or not, that if thy heart be this night cold as the centre of an iceberg, yet if Christ shall come to thee, thy soul shall be as coals of juniper, that have a most vehement flame. Though to thy own apprehension thou seemest to be dead as the bones in a cemetery, yet if Jesus come to thee, thou shalt forthwith be as full of life as the seraphs who are as flames of fire. Why think you he will not come to you? Do you not remember how he did melt you when first he manifested himself to your soul? You were as vile then as you are now; you were certainly as ruined then as you are now; you had no more to merit his esteem then than you have now; you were as far off from him then as you are now — I might say even further off. But lo! he came to you when you did not seek him; he came in the sovereignty of his grace and the sweetness of his

mercy when you despised him. Wherefore, then, should he not come to you now? Oh! breathe the prayer, tenderly and hopefully breathe the prayer, “Draw me,” and you will soon find power to run, and when all your passions and powers are fled, the King will speedily bring you into his chamber. Dark as your present state may be, there are sure signs of breaking day. I want you, brethren, to believe and to expect that you shall hold this night with Christ the richest, sweetest fellowship that ever mortal was privileged to enjoy, and that of a sudden. I know your cares — forget them. I know your sins — bring them to his feet. I know the wandering of your heart — ask him to tether you to his cross with the same cords that bound him to the pillar of his flagellation. I know your brain is perplexed, and your thoughts flying hither and thither, distracted with many cares — put on the thorn-crown, and let that be the antidote of all your manifold inquietudes. Methinks Jesus is putting in his hand by the hole of the door. Are not your bowels moved for him? Rise up and welcome him; and as the bread is broken, and the wine is passed round, come, and eat and drink of him, and be not strange to him. “Let not conscience make you linger”; let not doubts and fears hold you back from fellowship with him who loved you or ever the earth was, but do rest your unworthy head upon his blessed bosom, and talk with him, even though the only word you may be able to say may be, “Lord, is it I?” Do seek fellowship with him, as one who ignores every thought, feeling, or fact besides. So may it please him to manifest himself to you and to me as he doth not to the world.

If you that have never had fellowship with Christ think I am talking nonsense, I do not marvel. But let me tell you, if you had ever known what fellowship with Christ means, you would pawn your eyes, and barter your right arms, and give your estates away as trifles for the priceless favour. Princes would sell their crowns, and peers would renounce their dignities, to have five minutes’ fellowship with Christ. I will vouch for that. Why, I have had more joy in my Lord and Master in the space of the ticking of a clock than could be crammed into a lifetime of sensual delights, of the pleasures of taste, of the fascinations of literature. There is a depth, a matchless depth, in Jesu’s love. There is a luscious sweetness in the fellowship with him. You must eat, or you will never know the flavour of it. Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good! Behold how ready he still is to welcome sinners. Trust him and live. Feed on him, and grow strong.

Commune with him, and be happy. May every one of you who shall sit at the table have the nearest approach to Jesus that you ever had! Like two streams that, after flowing side by side, at length unite, so may Christ and our soul melt into one, even as Isis melts into Thames, till only one life shall flow, so that the life we live in the flesh shall be no more ours, but Christ that liveth in us. Amen.

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

DANIEL: A PATTERN FOR PLEADERS**A Sermon**

Published on Thursday, November 4th, 1915.

Delivered by

C.H. SPURGEON,

at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

On Lord's day Evening, 25th September, 1870.

“O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.”

— Daniel 9:19

Daniel was a man in very high position in life. It is true he was not living in his own native land, but, in the providence of God, he had been raised to great eminence under the dominion of the country in which he dwelt. He might, therefore, naturally have forgotten his poor kinsmen; many have done so. Alas! we have known some that have even forgotten their poor fellow Christians when they have grown in grace, and have thought themselves too good to worship with the poorer sort when they themselves have grown rich in this world's goods. But it was not so with Daniel. Though he had been made a president of the empire, yet he was still a Jew; he felt himself still one with the seed of Israel. In all the afflictions of his people he was afflicted, and he felt it his honour to be numbered with them, and his duty and his privilege to share with them all the bitterness of their lot. If he could not become despised and as poor as they, if God's providence had made him to be

distinguished, yet his heart would make no distinction: he would remember them and pray for them, and would plead that their desolation might yet be removed.

Daniel was also a man very high in spiritual things. Is he not one of God's three mighties in the Old Testament? He is mentioned with two others in a celebrated verse as being one of three whose intercessions God would have heard if he had heard any intercessions. But though thus full of grace himself (and for that very reason) he stooped to those who were in a low state. Rejoicing as he did before God as to his own lot, he sorrowed and cried by reason of those from whom joy was banished. It is a sad fault with those Christians who think themselves full of grace, when they begin to despise their fellows. They may rest assured they are greatly mistaken in the estimate they have formed of themselves. But it is a good sign when thine own heart is fruitful and healthy before God, when thou dost condescend to those that backslide, and search after such as are weak, and bring again such as were driven away. When thou hast, like thy Master, a tender sympathy for others, then art thou rich in divine things. Daniel showed his intimate sympathy with his poorer and less gracious brethren in the way of prayer. He would have shown that sympathy in other ways had occasions occurred, and no doubt he did; but this time the most fitting way of proving his oneness with them was in becoming an intercessor for them.

My object here and now will be to stir up the people of God, and especially the members of this church, to abound exceedingly in prayer; more and more to plead with God for the prosperity of his Church, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

First, our text gives us a model of prayer; and secondly, it and its surroundings give us encouragement for prayer. First, then, our text gives us: —

I. A MODEL OF PRAYER.

I think I may notice this first as to the antecedents of the prayer. This prayer of Daniel was not offered without consideration. He did not come to pray as some people do, as though it were a thing that required no forethought whatever. We are constantly told we ought to prepare our sermons, and I surely think that if a man does not prepare his sermons he

is very blameworthy. But are we never to prepare when we speak to God, and only when we speak to man? Is there to be no preparation of the heart of man from God when we open our mouth before the Lord? Do not you think we often do, both in private and public, begin to pray without any kind of consideration, and the words come, and then we try to quicken the words rather than the desires coming, and the words coming like garments to clothe them withal?

But Daniel's considerations lay in this first, he studied the books. He had with him an old manuscript of the prophet Jeremiah. He read that through. Perceiving such and such things spoken of, he prayed for them. Perceiving such and such a time given, and knowing that that time was almost come, he prayed the more earnestly! Oh! that you studied your Bibles more! Oh! that we all did! How we could plead the promises! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold him to his word, and say, "Fulfil this word unto thy servant, whereon thou hast caused me to hope." Oh! it is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's word, for there is no word that can prevail with him like his own. You tell a man, when you ask him for such and such a thing, "You yourself said you would do so and so." You have him then. And so when you can lay hold on the covenant angel with this consecrated grip, "Thou hast said! thou hast said!" then have you every opportunity of prevailing with him. May our prayers then spring out of our scriptural studies; may our acquaintance with the Word be such that we shall be qualified to pray a Daniel prayer.

He had, moreover, it is clear if you read the prayer again, studied the history of his people. He gives a little outline of it from the day in which they came out of Egypt. Christian people should be acquainted with the history of the Church — if not with the Church of the past, certainly with the Church of today. We make ourselves acquainted with the position of the Prussian army, and we will buy new maps about once a week to see all the places and the towns. Should not Christians make themselves acquainted with the position of Christ's army, and revise their maps to see how the kingdom of God is progressing in England, in the United States, on the Continent, or in the mission stations throughout the world? All our prayers would be much better if we knew more about the Church, and especially about our own Church. I am afraid I must say it — I am afraid

there are some members of the Church that do not know what is doing — hardly know what is meant by some of our enterprises. Brethren, know well the Church's needs as far as you can ascertain them; and then, like Daniel, your prayer will be a prayer founded upon information; and with the promises of God and the fact of the Church's wants, you will pray prayers of the spirit, and of the understanding. Let that stand for earnest consideration.

But next, Daniel's prayer was mingled with much humiliation. According to the Oriental custom which expresses the inward thought and feeling by the outward act, he put on a coarse garment made of hair, black, called sackcloth; and then taking handfuls of ashes, he cast them on his head and over the cloth that covered him, and then he knelt down in the very dust in secret, and these outward symbols were made to express the humiliation which he felt before God. We always pray best when we pray out of the depths; when the soul gets low enough she gets a leverage; she can then plead with God. I do not say we ought to ask to see all the evil of our own hearts. One good man prayed that prayer very often. He is mentioned in some of the Puritan writers — a minister of the gospel. It pleased God to hear his prayer, and he never rejoiced afterwards. It was with great difficulty that he was even kept from suicide, so deep and dreadful was the agony he experienced when he did begin to see his sin as he wanted to see it. It is best to see as much of that as God would have us see of it. You cannot see too much of Christ, but you might see even too much of your sin. Yet, brethren, this is rarely the case. We need to see much our deep needs, our great sins, for ah! that prayer shall go highest that comes from the lowest. To stoop well is a grand art in prayer. To pour out the last drop of anything like self-righteousness; to be able to say from the very heart, "Not for our righteousness' sake do we plead with thee, O God, for we have sinned, and our fathers too." Put the negative, the weightiest negative, upon any idea of pleading human merit. When thou canst do this, then art thou in the right way to pray a prayer that will move the arm of God, and bring thee down a blessing. Oh! some of you ungodly ones have tried to pray, but you have not bowed yourselves. Proud prayers may knock their heads on mercy's lintel, but they can never pass through the portal. You cannot expect anything of God unless you put yourself in the right place, that is, as a beggar at his footstool; then will he hear you, and not until then.

Daniel's prayer instructs us in the next point. It was excited by zeal for God's glory. We may sometimes pray with wrong motives. If I seek the conversion of souls in my ministry, is not that a good motive? Yes, it is; but suppose I desire the conversion of souls in order that people may say, "What a useful minister he is," that is a bad motive, which spoils it all. If I am a member of a Christian Church, and I pray for its prosperity, is not that right? Certainly; but if I desire its prosperity merely that I and others may be able to say, "See our zeal for the Lord! See how God blesses us rather than others!" that is a wrong motive. The motive is this, "Oh! that God could be glorified, that Jesus might see the reward of his sufferings! Oh! that sinners might be saved, so that God might have new tongues to praise him, new hearts to love him! Oh! that sin were put an end to, that the holiness, righteousness, mercy, and power of God might be magnified!" This is the way to pray; when thy prayers seek God's glory, it is God's glory to answer thy prayers. When thou art sure that God is in the case, thou art on a good footing. If thou art praying for that which will greatly glorify him, thou mayest rest assured thy prayer will speed. But if it do not speed, and it be not for his glory, why, then thou mayest be better content to be without it than with it. So pray thou, but keep thy bowstring right; it will be unfit to shoot the arrow of prayer unless this be thy bowstring, "God's glory, God's glory" — this above all; first, last, and midst; the one object of my prayer.

Then coming closer to the prayer, I would have you notice how intense Daniel's prayer was. "O Lord, hear: O Lord, forgive: O Lord, hearken and do, defer not for thine own sake." The very repetitions here express vehemence. It is a great fault of some people in public prayer when they repeat the name, "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," so often — it often amounts to taking God's name in vain, and is, indeed, a vain repetition. But when the reiteration of that sacred name comes out of the soul, then it is no vain repetition; then it cannot be repeated too often, and is not open to anything like the criticism which I used just now. So you will notice how the prophet here seems to pour out his soul with "O Lord, O Lord, O Lord," as if, if the first knock at mercy's door does not open it, he will knock again, and make the gate to shake, and then the third time come with another thundering stroke if, perhaps, he may succeed. Cold prayers ask God to deny them: only importunate prayers will be replied to. When the Church of God cannot take "No" for an answer, she shall not have "No"

for an answer. When a pleading soul must have it; when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the angel go without a blessing, the angel shall not go till he has given the blessing to such a pleading one. Brethren, if there be only one among us that can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come. Let this encourage any earnest man or woman here that fears that others are not excited to prayer as they should be. Dear brother, do you undertake it? Dear sister, in God's name, do you undertake it? and God will send a blessing to many through the prayer of one. But how much better would it be if many a score of men here, ay, the entire Church of God, were stirred up to this, that we give him no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth! Oh! that our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing. As soon as Zion travailed — you know that word — as soon as she travailed she brought forth children. Not till it comes to travail — not till then — may we expect to see much done. God send us such travelling to each one of us, and then the promise is near to fulfilling.

But coming still to the text, and a little more closely, I want to observe that this remarkable prayer was a prayer of understanding as well as earnestness; for some people in their earnestness talk nonsense, and I think I have heard prayers which God might understand, but I am sure I did not. Now here is a prayer which we can understand as well as God. It begins thus, "O Lord, hear." He asks an audience. This is how the petitioner does if he comes before an earthly majesty: he asks to be heard. He begins with that, "O Lord, hear. I am not worthy to be heard: if thou shut me and my case out of hearing, it will be just." He asks an audience: he gets it, and now he goes at once to his point without delay, "O Lord, forgive." He knows what he wants. Sin was the mischief, the cause of all the suffering: he puts his hand on it. Oh! it is grand when one knows what one is praying for. Many prayers maunder and wander — the praying person evidently thinks he is doing a good thing in saying certain good phrases, but the prayer that hits the target in the centre is the prayer it is good to pray. God teach us to pray so. "O Lord, forgive."

Then observe how he presses the point home. "O Lord, hearken and do." If thou hast forgiven — he does not stop a minute, but here comes another prayer quick on the heels of it. Do, good Lord, interpose for the rebuilding of Jerusalem — do interpose for the redemption of thy captive people; do

interpose for the re-establishment of sacred worship. It is well when our prayers can fly fast, one after another, as we feel we are gaining ground. You know in wrestling (and that is a model of prayer) much depends on the foothold, but oftentimes there is much depending upon swiftness and celerity of action. So in prayer. "Hear, me, my Lord! Thou hast heard me, forgive me. Have I come so far, then work for me — work the blessings I want." Follow up your advantage; build another prayer on the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him; because he has heard me once, therefore will I call again." Such a prayer proves the thoughtfulness of him who prays. It is a prayer offered in the spirit, and with understanding also.

And now one other thing. The prayer of Daniel was a prayer of holy nearness. You catch that thought in the expression, "O my God." Ah! we pray at a distance oftentimes: we pray to God as if we were slaves lying at his throne-foot; as if we might, perhaps, be heard, but we did not know. But when God helps us to pray as we should we come right to him, even to his feet, and we say, "Hear me, O my God." He is God; therefore, we must be reverent. He is my God; therefore, we may be familiar; we may come close to him. I believe some of the expressions that Martin Luther used in prayer, if I were to use them, would be little short of blasphemy, but as Martin Luther used them I believe they were deeply devout and acceptable with God, because he knew how to come close to God. You know how your little child climbs your knee: he gives you a kiss, and he will say to you many little things that if a person in the market were to say, you could not bear; they must not be said. No other being may be so familiar with you as your child. But oh! a child of God — when his heart is right — how near he gets to his God; he pours out his childlike complaint in childlike language before the Most High. Brethren, this is to be noted well, that though he is thus pleading and in the position of humility, yet still not in the position of slavery. It is still "O my God" — he grasps the covenant: faith perceives the relationship to be unbroken between the soul and God, and pleads that relation. "O my God."

Now the last thing I shall call your attention to in this model prayer is this, that the prophet uses argument. Praying ought always to be made up of arguing. "Bring forth your strong reasons" is a good canon for a prevalent

prayer. We should urge matters with God, and bring reasons before him — not because he wants reasons, but he desires us to know why we desire the blessing. In this text we have a reason given, first — “Defer not for thine own sake,” as much as if he had said, “If thou suffer this people of thine to perish, all the world will revile thy name; thine honour will be stained. This is thine own people, and because they are thy property, suffer not thine own estate to be endamaged, but save Jerusalem for thine own sake.”

Then next, he puts it on the same footing in another shape, “For thy city and thy people”; he urges that this people were not like other people. They had sinned truly, but still there was a relationship between them and God that existed between God and no other people. He pleads the covenant, in fact, between Abraham and Abraham’s seed and the God of the whole earth. Good pleading that! And then he puts in next, “For they are called by thy name.” They were said to be Jehovah’s people; they were named by the name of the God of Israel. “O God! let not a thing that bears thy name be trundled about like a common thing. Suffer it not to be trailed in the dust; come to the rescue of it. Thy stamp, thy seal is upon Israel. Israel belongs to thee; therefore, come and interpose.” Now from this I gather that if we would prevail we should plead arguments with God, and these are very many; and discreet minds when they are fervent will readily know how far to go in pleading, and where to stop. I remember one morning a dear brother now present praying in a way that seemed to me to be very prevalent when he spoke thus, “O Lord, thou hast been pleased to call thy Church thy Bride; now we, being evil, have such love towards our spouse that if there were anything in the world that would be for her good, we would not spare to give it to her; and wilt thou not, O Husband of the Church, do the like with thy spouse, and let thy Church receive a blessing now that she pleads for it?” It seemed good arguing, after Christ’s own sort, “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!” Get a promise, and spread it before the Lord, and say, “O Lord, thou hast said it; do it.” God loves to be believed in. He loves you to think he means what he says. He is a practical God himself. His word has power in it, and he does not like us to treat his promises as some of us do, as if they were waste paper, as if they were things to be read for the encouragement of our enthusiasm, but not to be used as matters of real

practical truth. Oh! plead them with God: fill your mouths with reasonings, and come before him. Make this your determination, that as a Church, seeing we need his Spirit, and need renewed prosperity, we will not spare nor leave a single argument unused by which we may prevail with the God of mercy to send us what we want. Thus much then upon this as a model of prayer. Now I shall want a little longer time to speak upon: —

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE TEXT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS GIVE TO US IN PRAYER.

Brethren, it is always an encouragement to do a thing when you see the best of men doing it. Many a person has taken a medicine only because he has known wiser men than himself take it. The best and wisest of persons in all ages have adopted the custom of prayer in times of distress, and, indeed, in all times. That ought to encourage us to do the same. I heard a dear Welsh brother speak last Thursday evening, who interested and amused me too, but I cannot profess to repeat the way in which he told us a Biblical story. It was something in this way. He told it as a Welshman, and not quite as I think I might. He said that after the Lord Jesus Christ had gone up to heaven, having told his disciples to wait at Jerusalem until the Spirit of God was given, Peter might have said, “Well, now we must not go out preaching till this blessing comes, so I shall be off a-fishing.” And John might have said, “Well, there is the old boat over at the lake of Gennesaret; I think I shall go and see how that is getting on; it is a long time since I saw after it.” And each one might have said, “Well, I shall go about my business, for it is not many days hence when it is coming, and we may as well be at our earthly calling.” “No,” saith he, “they did not say that at all, but Peter said, ‘Where shall we hold a prayer meeting?’ and Mary said she had got a nice large room that would do for a prayer meeting. True it was in a back street, and the house was not very respectable, and, ‘Besides,’ says she, ‘it is up at the very top of the house, but it is a big room.’ ‘Never mind,’ says Peter, ‘it will be nearer to heaven.’ So they went into the upper room, and there began to pray, and did not cease the prayer meeting till the blessing came.” Then the brother told us the next story of a prayer meeting in the Bible. Peter was in prison, and Herod was so afraid that he would get out again that he had sixteen policemen to look after him, and the brethren knew they could not get

Peter out in any other way than one; so they said, "We will hold a prayer meeting." Always the way with the Church at that time, when anything was amiss, to say, "Where shall we have a prayer meeting?" So Mistress Mark said she had got a good room which would do very well for a prayer meeting. It was in a back street, so nobody would know of it, and they would be quiet. So they held that prayer meeting, and began to pray. I do not suppose they prayed the Lord to knock the prison walls down, nor to kill the policemen, nor anything of that kind, but they only prayed that Peter might get out, and they left how he was to get out to God. While they were praying there came a knock at the door. "Ah!" said they, "that is a policeman come after another of us. But Rhoda went to the door to look, and when she looked she started back in affright. What could she see? She looked again, however, and she was persuaded that it was no other than Peter. She went back to her mistress, and said, "There is Peter at the gate." Good souls! they had been praying that Peter might come out, but they could not believe it, and they said, "Why, it is his spirit — his angel." "No," said the girl, "I know Peter well enough; he has been here dozens of times, and I know it is Peter"; and in came Peter, and they all wondered at their unbelief. They had asked God to set Peter free, and free Peter was. It was the prayer meeting that did it. And rest assured we should, everyone, find it our best resource in every hour of need to draw near to God.

Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw,
 Prayer mounts the ladder Jacob saw,
 Gives exercise to faith and love,
 Brings every blessing from above.
 Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
 Prayer makes the Christian armour bright;
 And Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees. It is prayer that does it, and this fact should encourage us to pray.

The success of Daniel's prayer is the next encouragement. He had not got to the end of his prayer before a soft hand touched him, and he looked up, and there stood Gabriel in the form of a man. That was quick work surely. So Daniel thought, but it was much quicker than Daniel expected, for as soon as ever he began to pray, the word went forth for the angel to descend. The answer to prayer is the most rapid thing in the world.

“Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.” I believe electricity travels at the rate of two hundred thousand miles in a second — so it is estimated; but prayer travels faster than that, for it is, “Before they call I will answer.” There is no time occupied at all. When God wills to answer, the answer may come as soon as the desire is given. And if it delay, it is only that it may come at a better time — like some ships that come home more slowly because they bring the heavier cargo. Delayed prayers are prayers that are put out to interest awhile, to come home, not only with the capital, but with the compound interest too. Oh! prayer cannot fail — prayer cannot fail. Heaven may as soon fall as prayer fail. God may sooner change the ordinances of day and night, than he can cease to reply to the faithful, believing spirit-wrought prayer of his own quickened, earnest, importunate people. Therefore, because he sends success, brethren, pray much.

It ought to encourage us, too, in the next place, to recollect that Daniel prayed for a very hard case. Jerusalem was in ruins; the Jews were scattered; their sins were excessive; but, nevertheless, he prayed, and God heard him. We are not in so bad a case as that with the Church; we have not to mourn that God has departed from us; our prayer is that he may not, even in any measure, withdraw his hand. I do pray God that I may long be buried ere he shall suffer this Church to lose his presence. There is nothing that I know of in connection with our church life that is worth a single farthing, if the Spirit of God be gone. He must be there. Brethren, if you are not prayerful, if you are not holy, if you are not earnest, God does not keep priests, deacons, elders, and church members living near to him. The sorrow of heart which one will feel if one be kept right himself cannot be expressed. May the Lord prevent our declining. If you are declining, may he bring you back. Some of you, I am afraid, are so — getting cold. Now and then I hear of a person who finds it too far to come to the Tabernacle. It used to be very short one time, though it was four or five miles. But when the heart gets cold, the road gets long. Ah! there are some who want this little attention and the other. Time was when they stood in the aisle, in the coldest and draughtiest place — if the word was blessed to them, they would not have minded it. May God grant that you may be a living people always, for years and years to come, until Christ himself comes. But oh! you that are living near to God, make this your daily, hourly, nightly prayer, that he would not withdraw from us for our sins,

but continue to stretch out his hand in lovingkindness, even until he gathers us to our Father.

It ought, further, to encourage us in prayer to remember that Daniel was only one man, and yet he won his suit. But if two of you agree as touching any one thing, it shall be done — but a threefold cord — a fifty-fold cord — oh! if, out of our four thousand members, every one prayed instantly, day and night, for the blessing, oh! what prevalence there must be! Would God it were so!

Brethren, how about your private prayers: are they what they should be? Those morning prayers, those evening prayers, and that midday prayer (for surely your soul must go up to heaven, even if your knees are not bent) — are those prayers as they should be? It will bring leanness upon you; there cannot be fat soul and neglected prayer. There must be much praying if there be much rejoicing in the Lord.

And then your family prayers: do you keep them up? I was in a railway carriage the other day, and a gentleman said to me, who was sitting beside me, “My son is going to be married tomorrow — going to be married to one of your members.” “I am glad to hear it,” I said. “I hope he is a believer.” “Oh! yes, sir; he has been a member of your church for some years. I wish you would write me something to give them tomorrow.” Well, you know how the carriage will shake, but I managed to jot down something on a little bit of paper with a pencil. The words, I think, that I put were something like this, “I wish you every joy. May your joys be doubled; may your sorrows be divided and lightened.” But then I put, “Build the altar before you build the tent. Take care that daily prayer begins your matrimonial life.” I am sure we cannot expect our children to grow up a godly seed if there is no family prayer. Are your family prayers, then, what they ought to be?

Then next, let me say to each one, how about your prayers as members of the Church? Perhaps I am the last person that might complain about a prayer meeting. It really is a grand sight to see so many of you, but I must confess I don’t feel quite content, for there are some members whom I used to see, but don’t see now. I know I see some fresh ones, and we are never short of praying men, but I want to see the others as well. I know those who are constantly at prayer meetings can say it is good to be there.

It is the best evening in the week often to us, when we come together to entreat for the blessing. Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, "All our strength lies in prayer"! When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer. What prayers we put up night and day when we launched out to preach the gospel in a larger building! And what an answer God sent us. Since then, in times of need and trouble we have cried to God, and he has heard us. Daily he sends us help for our college, for our orphanage, and for our other works, in answer to prayer. Oh! you that come here as members of the Church, if you do not pray, the very beams out of these walls and the stones will cry out against you. This house was built in answer to prayer. If anybody had said that we, who were but few and poor, could have erected such a structure. I think it would have sounded impossible. But it was done — you know how readily it was done, how God raised us up friends, how he has helped us to this day. Oh! don't stop your prayers. You seem to me, good people, to be very like that king who, when he went to the dying prophet, was told, "Take your arrows and shoot," and he went to the window, and he shot but once, and the prophet was angry and said, "Thou shouldest have shot many times, and then thou wouldest have utterly destroyed thy enemies." And so we pray, as it were, but little. We ask but little, and God gives it. Oh! that we could ask much, and pray for much, and shoot many arrows and plead very earnestly. Look at this city of ours. I would not say a word in derogation of my country, but I am afraid there is not much to choose between the sin of London and the sin of Paris. And see what has come on that was going on there without fearing that national sin would bring national chastisement. And oh! this wicked City of London, with its dens of vice and filthiness! Ye are the salt of the earth; ye that love Christ, let not your salt lose its savour. God forbid that you should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for this wicked people. Everywhere, sea and land, is compassed by the adversaries of the truth, to make proselytes. I beseech you, compass the mercy-seat, that their machinations may be defeated. At this time there ought to be special prayer. When God in providence seems to be shaking the Papacy to its base, now should we cry aloud and spare not. Out of these convulsions God may bring lasting blessings. Let us not neglect to work when God works. Let the hand of the man be lifted up in prayer when the wing of the angel is moved in providence. We may expect

great things if we can pray greatly, and wrestle earnestly. I call you, in God's name, to the mercy-seat. Draw near thither, with intense importunity; and such a blessing shall come as ye have not yet imagined. Pray for some here present that are unconverted. There are a good many of them. They will not pray for themselves; let us pray them into prayer; let us pray God for them, until they at last pray God for themselves. Prayer can mercy's door unlock, for others as well as for our own persons; let us, therefore, abound in prayer, and God send us the blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C.H. SPURGEON

Daniel 9:1-11

Verses 1, 2. *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

Daniel was himself a prophet, but he studied the inspired prophecies of Jeremiah. If such a man need read Scripture, how much more ought we! Whatever light we may suppose to dwell within us, we shall do well to walk by the more sure word of prophecy.

3-5. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:*

Daniel certainly had rebelled less than any of his countrymen, and yet he is the first to make confession on their behalf. So, my brethren, when we have confessed our own sins, and have found mercy, then we should begin to be intercessors for others. We should make confession for the sins of our families, for the sins of our city, for the sins of our country. If no longer need we plead for salvation for ourselves because we have obtained it, let us give the full force of our prayers for the benefit of others.

6. *Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

It greatly increases sin when we sin against warnings sent from God. Daniel confesses this.

7-9. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him;

What a gracious verse that is! Surely it might be printed in letters of gold, and every trembling, penitent sinner might look at it till at last beams of light should dart into the darkness of his despair.

10, 11. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

THE KIND OF REVIVAL WE NEED

by

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

It is good for us to draw nigh unto God in prayer. Our minds are grieved to see so little attention given to united prayer by many churches.

How can we expect a blessing if we are too idle to ask for it? How can we look for a Pentecost if we never meet with one another, in one place, to wait upon the Lord? Brethren, we shall never see much change for the better in our churches till the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians.

But now that we have come together, how shall we pray? Let us not degenerate into formality, or we shall be dead while we think we live. Let us not waiver through unbelief, or we shall pray in vain. Oh, for great faith with which to offer great prayers!

We have been mingling praise and prayer together as a delicious compound of spices, fit to be presented upon the altar of incense through Christ our Lord; may we not at this time offer some special far-reaching petition? It is suggested to me that we pray for a true and genuine revival of religion throughout the world.

A Real and Lasting Revival

I am glad of any signs of life, even if they should be feverish and transient, and I am slow to judge any well intended movement, but I am very fearful that many so called revivals in the long run wrought more harm than good. A species of religious gambling has fascinated many men, and given them a distaste for the sober business of true godliness.

But if I would nail down counterfeits upon the counter, I do not therefore undervalue true gold. Far from it. It is to be desired beyond measure that the Lord would send a real and lasting revival of spiritual life.

We need a work of the Holy Spirit of a supernatural kind, putting power into the preaching of the Word, inspiring all believers with heavenly energy, and solemnly affecting the hearts of the careless, so that they turn to God and live. We would not be drunk with the wine of carnal excitement, but we would be filled with the Spirit. We would behold the fire descending from heaven in answer to the effectual fervent prayers of righteous men. Can we not entreat the Lord our God to make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people in this day of declension and vanity?

Old-fashioned Doctrine

We want a revival of old-fashioned doctrine. I know not a single doctrine which is not at this hour studiously undermined by those who ought to be its defenders. There is not a truth that is precious to the soul which is not now denied by those whose profession it is to proclaim it. To me it is clear that we need a revival of old-fashioned gospel preaching like that of Whitefield and Wesley.

The Scriptures must be made the infallible foundation of all teaching; the ruin, redemption and regeneration of mankind must be set forth in unmistakable terms.

Personal Godliness

Urgently do we need a revival of personal godliness. This is, indeed, the secret of church prosperity. When individuals fall from their steadfastness, the church is tossed to and fro; when personal faith is steadfast, the church abides true to her Lord.

It is upon the truly godly and spiritual that the future of religion depends in the hand of God. Oh, for more truly holy men, quickened and filled with the Holy Spirit, consecrated to the Lord and sanctified by His truth.

Brethren, we must each one live if the church is to be alive; we must live unto God if we expect to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in our hands. Sanctified men are the salt of society and the saviours of the race.

Domestic Religion

We deeply want a revival of domestic religion. The Christian family was the bulwark of godliness in the days of the puritans, but in these evil times hundreds of families of so-called Christians have no family worship, no restraint upon growing sons, and no wholesome instruction or discipline. How can we hope to see the kingdom of our Lord advance when His own disciples do not teach His gospel to their own children?

Oh, Christian men and women, be thorough in what you do and know and teach! Let your families be trained in the fear of God and be yourselves “holiness unto the Lord”; so shall you stand like a rock amid the surging waves of error and ungodliness which rage around us.

Vigorous, Consecrated Strength

We want also a revival of vigorous, consecrated strength. I have pleaded for true piety; I now beg for one of the highest results of it. We need saints. We need gracious minds trained to a high form of spiritual life by much converse with God in solitude.

Saints acquire nobility from their constant resort to the place where the Lord meets with them. There they also acquire that power in prayer which we so greatly need. Oh, that we had more men like John Knox, whose prayers were more terrible to Queen Mary than 10,000 men! Oh, that we had more Elijahs by whose faith the windows of heavens should be shut or opened!

This power comes not by a sudden effort; it is the outcome of a life devoted to the God of Israel! If our life is all in public, it will be a frothy, vapoury ineffectual existence; but if we hold high converse with God in secret, we shall be mighty for good. He that is a prince with God will take high rank with men, after the true measure of nobility.

Beware of being a lean-to; endeavour to rest on your own walls of real faith in the Lord Jesus. May none of us fall into a mean, poverty-stricken dependence on man! We want among us believers like those solid, substantial family mansions which stand from generation to generation as

landmarks of the country; no lath-and-plaster fabrics, but edifices solidly constructed to bear all weathers, and defy time itself.

Given a host of men who are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, the glory of God's grace will be clearly manifested, not only in them, but in those round about them. The Lord send us a revival of consecrated strength, and heavenly energy!

Preach by your hands if you cannot preach by your tongues. When our church members show the fruits of true godliness, we shall soon have inquiries for the tree which bears such a crop.

Oh the coming together of the saints is the first part of Pentecost, and the ingathering of sinners is the second. It began with "only a prayer meeting", but it ended with a grand baptism of thousands of converts. Oh that the prayers of believers may act as lode stones to sinners! Oh that every gathering of faithful men might be a lure to attract others to Jesus! May many souls fly to Him because they see others speeding in that direction.

"Lord, we turn from these poor foolish procrastinators to thyself, and we plead for them with thine all-wise and gracious spirit! Lord, turn them and they shall be turned! By their conversion, pray that a true revival has commenced tonight! Let it spread through all our households, and then run from church to church till the whole of christendom shall be ablaze with a heaven-descended fire!"

EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS 11:1-26

by

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Verses 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

The names of those who lived in old time are handed down with commendation because of their faith. If they had had no faith, we should have had no report of them.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

The world was not made out of the world. There was nothing to make it out of. It was created simply by the word of God, and our faith knows that. I question whether we should ever get in the matter of the creation beyond what is revealed to our faith. Reason is all very well, but faith mounts upon the shoulders of reason, and sees much farther than reason with her best telescope will ever be able to see. It is enough for us who have faith that God has told us how he made the world, and we believe it.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

He spoke by faith when he lived. Faith makes him speak now that he is dead. What wonders faith can work. The first saint who entered heaven entered there, it is certain, by faith. It was faith that enabled him to present an acceptable sacrifice, and it was faith that presented him to heaven. If the first who entered heaven entered there by faith, rest assured that will be true to the last; and none will enter there but those who believe.

5. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Beloved, if we cannot get a translation as Enoch did, let us not be content without getting God's good pleasure as he did. Oh! that it may be said of us that we pleased God. Then we shall, one way or another, conquer death; for if we do, we shall triumph over the grave; and if Christ shall come before we die, we shall triumph in the coming of Christ. Anyhow, faith shall be more than a match for the last enemy.

6. But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Do we not sometimes fail in this matter? We try to come to God without believing that he is. We seem to pray to nothing, or to nobody, to a spectre, to a phantom. But that prayer which is accepted is prayer to a real God, of whom we are assured that he is. Do we not also fail in our belief as to the success of prayer? We do not fully recognize that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He that prays, believing that God will be found by him, shall not pray in vain. Tonight we may well say, "Lord, increase our faith."

7. By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear,

For there is a fear which comes of faith — a fear which is the strength of faith's arms, by which it moves us into action. It is not slavish fear. It is a fit, and proper, and reasonable fear, such as any man must have that believes God's threatenings. "Moved with fear."

7. Prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Every act of faith condemns the world. Men who did not believe in God were, some of them, made to feel condemned, and others were condemned, even if they did not feel it, when they saw this holy man building a great ship upon dry land — a ship which he never would launch, but to which God would bring the sea, so that he should float over the waters deep,

absolutely secure, whilst others perished. If you want to judge the wickedness of men, you need not set yourself to do it in the first place. Live a holy life, and you will judge the ungodly. I have heard it said that if there is a crooked stick, and you want to show how crooked it is, you need not waste words in description. Place a straight one by the side of it, and the thing is done directly. Noah condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

8. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Very easy to read about that, but not so easy to do it — to tear yourself from home and friends — to go into a totally unknown country, swarming with enemies, solely on the promise that one day that country should belong to his seed. It might be hundreds of years afterwards: but God had called him, and Abraham raised no question, but away he went.

9. By faith he sojourned into the land of promise, as in a strange country

Not building a house there — not becoming a citizen of it, but always dwelling there in gypsy fashion.

9. Dwelling in tabernacles

That is, in tents.

9, 10. With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

He did not build a city. He did not try to do so, “for he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.”

11. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

And that was good judgment, was it not? There is no mistake about that. Whatever difficulties may lie in the way, we may always know that he is faithful who hath promised. You are not past age, my brother. God will bless you in seeking to do good. You are not past age, my sister. Have but

faith in God, and then in your old age you may bring many to the Saviour's feet. He is faithful that has promised.

12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead,

For he was ordered to be sacrificed. There sprung from one, and him as good as dead.

12. So many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

Or if this text means Abraham, then his body was dead; and yet there sprang of him a seed "so many as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable."

13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises,

By which is meant, not that they did not receive the promises, but they did not receive the things promised.

13, 14. But having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

They have not come to it yet; nor will they as long as they are here below. They are still seeking a country.

15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

Abraham, if he wanted to settle down, might have crossed once more the river, and gone back to Ur of Chaldees. But he did not look for a city upon earth. He was evidently looking for one somewhere else. The country that he sought was not beyond the Euphrates, but beyond the narrow stream of death.

16. But now they desire a better country,

Do you feel those desires within your heart? If not, surely you have no faith, for they that have faith in the better country desire it.

16. That is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

He might be ashamed to be called their God if he had unsettled them, and made them long for another city, and yet had never prepared one for them. The longings of the saints are but prophecies of the benediction of God. That which he makes us hunger for, is prepared. The bread of life shall be given us, and that country which he makes us seek, exists, and will be found of us. Wherefore keep your face that way, and let every longing and pining for the home country reassure you that this is not any dreamland, but that there is such a place.

17-19. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead: from whence also he received him in a figure.*

Faith does not always account. She is satisfied with God's word. But when she does account, then she is great at accounts, for here is a man who had not heard of the resurrection from the dead, yet believing in it. Christ had not risen from the dead. There had been no such chapter for Abraham to read as that wonderful one, the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to Corinthians; and yet his faith seemed to have a revelation within itself. God must keep his promise. Therefore, if I, in obedience to him, put the promised seed to death, God can raise him up, for he must keep his promise. He cannot lie.

20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

Blind as he was, he could see more than many that have good eyes, for he had the eyes of faith. There is no end to the blessing that faith can bestow upon others. A believing man can bless his children. I believe in the blessings of good men. Why should I not? If they are believers, they have power with God. Their wishes are prayers. Their prayers are heard. Their blessings then are realities.

21. *By faith Jacob when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

That wonderful staff on which he leaned when he came out of Jabbok — that wonderful staff with which he crossed this Jordan in his poverty, but after which he became two bands.

22. *By faith Joseph when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.*

Faith touches all sense of things — even a funeral and bones, too, for faith is good at everything. She can sweep the house and seek diligently. She can enter heaven. She can go to the gates of death. Oh! for more of it!

23. *By faith Moses when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

Their faith made them hide him, for that faith laid hold of God, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24-26. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.*

EXPOSITION OF PSALM 51

By

C.H. Spurgeon

There are seven penitential Psalms, but this seems to be the chief one of the seven. The language of David is as suitable to us today as it was to him, and though much was lost to the cause of righteousness by David's sin, yet the Church is enriched for all ages by the possession of such a Psalm as this. It is a marvellous recompense. Surely here the Lord reigneth, bringing good out of evil, blessing generation after generation through that which in itself was a great evil.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

Observe he appeals to mercy, and mercy only — to mercy, abounding mercy in its tenderest and kindest aspect. “According to thy tender mercies.” Note here David does not use his name. He does not say, “Lord remember David”: he is ashamed of his name. And he does not seem to want God to remember that, but to remember mercy: and to have pity upon this nameless sinner. He does not say, “Save the son of thine handmaid,” or “Deliver thy servant,” as he was wont to do; he just appeals to mercy, and that is all. And observe it is not “Have mercy upon me, oh! my God.” He is far off now: he has lost the comfortable assurance of the covenant of grace, and so it is rather more like the cry of the prodigal when he returned and said, “I am not worthy to be called thy son”: have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness — according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out — (or as more correctly it might be rendered, “wash out” — “wipe out”) — my transgressions. The allusion is rather to a dish — wipe it out, turn it upside down, and turn out all that is in it, sweep it away — wipe out all my transgressions. Or it may be as a withdrawal of a record in court when the indictment is withdrawn, “Lord be pleased to quash the indictment against me; blot out all my transgressions.”

2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

Nothing about the punishment observe — he does not mention that. The true penitent, though he dreads punishment, much more dreads sin. It is sinfulness — sin that he would be delivered from. “Wash me.” Thou must do it; no other washing will suffice. Wash me thoroughly, till I am perfectly cleansed: cleanse me from my sin — my sin. I do not lay it on anyone else; cleanse me from it.

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

Unless sin is before us, we shall not be likely to spread it before God; but when we have knowledge of it, then we shall make acknowledgement of it to God. “My sin is ever before me.” He was in such a state of heart that the remembrance of sin seemed painted on his eyeballs. Even in his dreams he remembered it: he was never free from the dread remembrance of it.

4. *Against thee only have I sinned.*

Yet he had sinned against many more; but just now the thought of his sin against God swallowed up all else. All his offenses against his fellow-men were trivial compared with the high treason which he had committed against his God. This is the virus of sin, that it is sin against God.

4. *And done this evil in thy sight.*

Whilst thou wast looking on. For a thief to steal in the presence of the Judge is impudence indeed, but yet in thy presence, O my God, I have done this evil.

4. *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

As much as to say, “I make this confession of sin, which is so black, that if thou shouldest judge me, however severely, or sentence me to however exemplary a punishment, thou wilt be quite clear and quite just. I could put in no plea against whatever thou shouldest command. I richly deserve all thy wrath can bring upon me.”

5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin, did my mother conceive me.*

The black stream leads him to look at the black fountain. How can we expect from parents who have sinned that there should be born unto them pure and spotless children. No! the tendencies in us all towards evil are there at the very first. He does not at all venture to excuse himself, but rather to aggravate his sin, that he had been a sinner from his very birth.

6, 7. *Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:*

He had seen the leper pronounced clean when the hyssop was dipped in blood and sprinkled on him; but then the leper had to be clean beforehand before this could make him ceremonially clean. He is leaping through the first process and coming to the closing one, his soul anxious to be accepted with God at once.

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Yet what can be whiter than snow? Snow is not like a whited wall that is but white on the surface: it is white all through. And yet when God washes the believer, he makes him whiter than snow, for the snow soon becomes tainted, soon loses its purity; but we never shall if God shall wash us. There was no provision made for the cleansing of an adulterer under the law. David, therefore, had to look beyond all the sacrifices of the law to the cleansing power of the great coming sacrifice, and he so believed in it that with a brave faith — (I know no more brave expression in all Scripture than this) — he says, “Wash me, filthy as I am, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

The original expression is “bones cracked,” or, as one puts it, smashed. His sense of sin had been so great that he felt as one might feel whose very bones had been smashed by some terrible blow. So he seems to say that, as there may be a delightful pleasure in having every one of these broken bones restored, such would be his pleasure if God would pardon his sins.

9. *Hide thy face from my sins,*

If we set out sins before our own faces, then God will turn his face away from our sins. If we hide our sins from our faces, God will set them before his face, but when they are ever before us they shall be never before him.

9, 10. *And blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God:*

It is a creation: the very word is used which is employed concerning the creation in the first chapter of Genesis. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

11. *Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.*

I have put thee away from my presence by forgetting thee, but put me not away from thy presence. I have been filled with an unHoly Spirit, but oh! take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

12. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me.*

He feels how much he needs it. The burnt child dreads the fire. "Uphold me with thy free spirit."

13. *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways: and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

And David has been doing that ever since, for this Psalm has been a continual sermon to sinners, teaching them God's ways in pardoning sin; and many, I doubt not, have been converted unto God by his Spirit through the language of this Psalm. When you and I find Christ, let us tell of our blessed finding. Hast thou honey? Eat it not all thyself: go, tell thy fellow-men. Art thou saved? Tarry not, but go and spread the news that others may be saved too.

14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation;*

His faith is growing. He has humbled himself. It is the way to rise. Weaken thyself before God, and thou shalt grow strong. Empty thyself, and thou shalt be filled; bow low, and he will lift thee up. "Thou God of my salvation."

14. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*

Those tongues that confess sins are the best tongues to sing with. That tongue which has been salted with the brine of penitence is fitted to be sweet with the honey of praise.

15. *O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*

You know the leper when he was unclean — what did he do? He covered his lips, as much as to confess that he was not fit to speak. So here the unclean David, with the covering over his lips, will not venture to speak until the Lord has taken away his sin, and opened his mouth for him. It was this that Isaiah meant when he said, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips”; but when it was said concerning the live coal, “Lo, this hath touched thy lips,” then he spake right eloquently. “Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.”

16. *For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.*

Here we have what God does desire, and what he does not. If you turn to the sixth verse, you will see what he does desire. “Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.” Now here he does not desire the mere outward and external worship rendered by sacrifice. It was not the type alone that satisfied him.

17. *The sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

There are some spices that are never perfect in fragrance till they are pounded with the pestle in the mortar, and so is a broken heart. If it be made to suffer and to smart, yet there is sweet pleasure to the Lord when he perceives in his people the smart concerning sin — when they hate and loathe it.

18, 19. *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*

Gratitude ascends when sin is forgiven, and when God appears to bless his church, then she blesses her God.

EXPOSITION — PSALM 34:1-20

by

C.H. Spurgeon

Psalm 34:1-20

Verse 1. ***I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.***

“Others may do what they please, and murmur, and complain, and be filled with dread and apprehension of the future; but I will bless the Lord at all times. I can always see something for which I ought to bless him. I can always see some good which will come out of blessing him. Therefore will I bless him at all times. And this,” says the Psalmist, “I will not only do in my heart, but I will do it with my tongue. His praise shall continually be in my mouth,” that others may hear it, that others may begin to praise him, too, for murmuring is contagious, and so, thank God, is praise; and one man may learn from another — take the catchword and the keyword out of another man’s mouth, and then begin to praise God with him. “His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” What a blessed mouthful! If some people had God’s praises in their mouths, they would not so often have fault-finding with their fellow-men.

“If half the breath thus vainly spent” in finding fault with our fellow-Christians were spent in prayer and praise, how much happier, how much richer, we should be spiritually! “His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

2. ***My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.***

Boasting is generally annoying. Even those that boast themselves cannot endure that other people should boast. But there is one kind of boasting that even the humble can bear to hear — nay they are glad to hear it. “The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.” That must be boasting in God — a

holy glorying and extolling the Most High with words sought out with care that might magnify his blessed name. You will never exaggerate when you speak good things of God. It is not possible to do so. Try, dear brethren, and even boast in the Lord. There are many poor, trembling, doubting, humble souls that can hardly tell whether they are the Lord's people or not, and are half afraid whether they shall be delivered in the hour of trouble, that will become comforted when they hear you boasting. "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." "Why," says the humble soul, "God that helped that man can help me. He that brought him up through the deep waters, and landed him safely, can also take me through the river and through the sea, and give me final deliverance. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."

3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.

He cannot do enough of it himself. He wants others to come in and help him. First, he charges his own heart with the weighty and blessed business of praising God, and then he invites all around to unite with him in the sacred effort. "Magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together."

4. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

That was David's testimony. That is mine. Brother, that is yours. Is it not? Sister, is not that yours too? Well, if you have such a blessed testimony, be sure to bear it. Often do you whisper it in the mourner's ear, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me." Tell it in the scoffer's ear. When he says, "There is no God," and that prayer is useless, say to him, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." It is a pity that such a sweet encouraging profitable testimony should be kept back. Be sure at all proper times to make it known. But it is not merely ourselves. There are others who can speak well of God.

5. They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed.

And who were they? Why, all the people of God — the whole company of the saints in heaven, and the saints on earth. It can be said of them all, "They looked to him, and were lightened." As there is life in a look, so is there light in a look. Oh! you that looked to Christ and live, at first look to

him again, if it is dark with you tonight, and speedily it shall be light round about you. “They looked unto him, and were lightened.”

6. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Who was he? He was a poor man — any poor man — nothing very particular about him, but he was poor — a poor man. What did he do? He cried. That was the style of praying he adopted — as a child cries — the natural expression of pain. Poor man, he did not know how to pray a fine prayer, and he could not have preached you a sermon if you had given him a bishop’s salary for it; but he cried. He could do that. You do not need to go to the Board School to learn how to cry. Any living child can cry. This poor man cried. What came of it? “The Lord heard him.” I do not suppose anybody else did; or, if they did, they laughed at it. But it did not signify to him. The Lord heard him. And what came of that? He “saved him out of all his troubles.” Oh! is there a poor man here tonight in trouble. Had he not better copy the example of this other poor man? Let him cry to the Lord about it. Let him come and bring his burdens before the great One who hears poor men’s prayers. And, no doubt, that poor man lived to tell the same tale as he who wrote this verse. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles.”

7. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them.

It is no wonder, then, that they are delivered, for the angels are always handy. They are waiting round about God’s people. Lo, they are not at a distance to fly swiftly and come for our rescue, but God has set a camp of angels round about all his people. Are we not royally attended? What a portion is ours! Many are they that be against us, but glorious are they that be for us, both in their number and their strength. But the text does not intend so much the angels, as one blessed, glorious, covenant angel — the angel of the Lord, the messenger of God. He it is that holds his camp hard by his people, and sends his messengers for their rescue in all times of difficulty.

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

That is the language of experience. Some of us have lived by trusting God for many years, and, instead of growing weary of it, we would invite others to do the same. Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good. You cannot know his goodness without tasting it. But there was never a soul yet that did taste of the goodness of the Lord but what could bear cheerful testimony that it was even so. “Oh! taste and see.” Partake of it. Become practically acquainted with it. Trust God yourselves, and none of you shall ever have to complain of God. To your latest hour you will have to find fault with yourselves, but never once will you have to accuse God of changeableness, or of unfaithfulness, or even of forgetfulness. “Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good, for blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

9, 10. *O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.*

They are very strong, those young lions. They are fierce. They are rapacious. They are cunning. And yet they do lack and suffer hunger. And there are many men in this world that are very clever, strong in body, and active in mind. They say that they can take care of themselves, and perhaps they do appear to prosper; but we know that often those who are the most prosperous apparently are the most miserable of men. They are young lions, but they do lack and suffer hunger. But when a man's soul lives upon God, he may have very little of this world, but he will be perfectly content. He has learnt the secret of true happiness. He does not want any good things, for the things that he does not have he does not wish to have. He brings his mind down to his estate, if he cannot bring his estate to his mind. He is thankful to have a little spending money on the road, for his treasure is above. He likes to have the best things last, and so he is well content, if he has food and raiment, to urge on his way to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. “The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

11. *Come, ye children.*

Ye that are beginning life — you that want to know where true happiness is found.

11. *Hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

It is that which you want to know, beyond everything else.

12, 13. *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

He that can rule his tongue can rule his whole body. Alas! that unruly member destroys peace and happiness in thousands of cases. The tongue can no man tame, but the grace of God can tame it; and that man begins life with a prospect of happiness whose tongue has been tamed by grace.

14. *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

True happiness is found in true holiness. "Depart from evil." That is, do not go after it. But it is much more than that. Go away from it. Give it a wide berth. "Depart from evil." But be not satisfied with the negatives. It is not enough to say, "I do not do any evil," but do good. The only way to keep out the evil is to fill the soul full of good. We must be active in the cause of God, or Satan will soon lead us into sin. "Depart from evil and do good."

"Seek peace." Be of a quiet turn of mind. Be always ready to forgive. "Seek peace and pursue it." That is, when it runs away, run after it. Make up your mind that you will have it. There are some that seek quarrels. There are some that seek revenge. As for you, seek peace and pursue it.

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*

God is all eye and all ear, and all his eye and all his ear are for his people. Are you distressed in heart? God sees your distress. Are you crying in secret in the bitterness of your soul? God hears your cry. You are not alone. O lonely spirit, broken spirit, be not dismayed; be not given to despair. God is with you. If he sees nothing else, he will see you. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous." And if he hears no one else in the world, he will hear you. "His ears are open to their cry."

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

You know what we say sometimes. “I set my face against such a thing as that.” Now God sets his face against them that do evil. You will come to an end, my friend. Your happiness, like a bubble painted with rainbow colours, may be the object of foolish desires; but in a little while it will burst and be gone, as the bubble is, and there will be nothing left of you. Even your remembrance will be wiped out from the face of the earth. What numbers of books have been written against God of which you could not get a copy now, except you went to a museum! What numbers of men have lived that have been scoffers; and they have had great names amongst the circles of unbelievers, but they are quite forgotten now! But the Christian Church treasures up names of poor, simple-hearted Christian men and women — treasures them up like jewels, and their fame is fresh after hundreds of years.

17. *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*

That is how we live, if you want to know. God makes us righteous, and then we cry. We often praise him. We desire to have our mouth full of it. But we cry as well, and whenever we cry God hears, and our troubles are removed.

18. *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

Are you here tonight, poor weeping Mary? Are you here, broken- hearted, troubled sinner? Are you here? Are you seeking the Lord? Do not seek him any longer. You have got him. Read the text, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.” He is with you now. Speak to him; cry to him; trust him. You shall find deliverance this night.

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous:*

You should hear some of them talk, and you would soon know that; for I know some of the righteous that seldom talk of anything else. “Oh! for badness of trade!” They have been losing money — oh! ever since I knew them. They had not any when they started, but they have gone on losing

money every year; and I believe they always will. And they always have pains of body. The weather is so bad. And they always have ungrateful friends. And the church they belong to is not up to the mark. Indeed, there is nothing around them that is right. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.”

Well now, dear brethren, as that is recorded in God’s Word, and as most of us have a pretty good acquaintance with that subject, I do not think that it is necessary for all of us to insist upon it every day. Could not we go on to the next part of the verse? “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” but — but —

19. *But the LORD delivereth him out of the them all.*

Not out of some of the, but out of them all, however numerous they may be.

20. *He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.*

He sustains no real injury. He gets flesh-wounds and bruises, but his bones are not broken. That is to say, the substantial part of his nature is well kept and preserved.

