



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 10: 1864

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 10: 1864* by Charles Spurgeon

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A Desperate Case—How to Meet It

A Sermon

(No. 549)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, January 10th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”—Matthew 17:19-21.

THE NARRATIVE, of which our text forms a part, describes a scene which took place immediately after the transfiguration of our Lord. Not to divorce it therefore from its connection, let us glance at the antecedents of the case, that nothing may be lost by negligence, or that peradventure we may gain something by meditation.

How great the difference between Moses and Christ! When Moses had been forty days upon the mountain-top, he underwent a kind of transfiguration, so that his face shone with exceeding brightness when he came down among the people, and he was obliged to put a veil over his face; for they could not bear to look upon his glory. Not so our Saviour! He had been really transfigured with a greater glory than Moses could ever know, and yet, as he came down from the mount, whatever radiance shone upon his face, it is not written that the people could not look upon him, but rather they were amazed, and running to him, they saluted him. The glory of the law repelled; for the majesty of holiness and justice, drive the awed spirits away from God. But the greater glory of Jesus attracts; though he is holy, and just, and righteous too, yet blended with these there is so much of truth and grace that sinners run to Jesus, amazed at his goodness, attracted by the charming fascination of his love, and they salute him, become his disciples, and take him to be their Lord and Master. Some of you may be just now blinded by the dazzling brightness of the law of God. You feel its claims on your conscience, but you cannot keep it in your life. It is too high; you cannot attain to it. Not that you find fault with the law; on the contrary, it commands your profoundest esteem. Still you are in no wise drawn by it to God; you are rather hardened in your heart, and you may be verging towards the inference of desperation: “As it is impossible for me to earn salvation by the works of the law, I will continue in my sins.” Ah, poor heart! Turn thine eye away from Moses, with all his repelling splendour, and look to Jesus, yonder, crucified for sinful men. Behold his flowing wounds, and thorn crowned head! He is the Son of God, and therein he is greater than Moses. He bear the wrath of God, and therein he shows more of God’s justice than Moses’ broken tablets could ever do. Look thou to him, and as thou feelest the attraction of his love, fly to his arms and thou shalt be saved.

How different the spirit of Moses and Jesus! When Moses comes down from the mountain, it is to purge the camp. He seems to grasp the fiery sword; he breaks the golden calf; he smites the idolaters; but when Jesus comes down from the mountain, he finds a strife in the camp, as Moses did; he finds his own apostles worsted and beaten, just as Aaron had been defeated by the clamours

of the people; but he has not a word of cursing; there is a gentle rebuke—"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" His actions are actions of mercy—no breaking in pieces, but healing; no cursing, but blessing: love sits smiling on his brow, as he touches the poor wretch who is almost dead with diabolical possession, and restores him to life and health. Go you then, to Jesus; leave the law and your own self-righteousness, for these can do nothing but curse you. Fly to Jesus, for be you whomsoever you may, there are pardons on his lips; there are blessings in his hands; there is love in his heart; and he will not disdain to receive even you.

How much of condescension there is in the manner of Christ! Our Lord, we have told you, had been very glorious on the mountain's top, with Moses and Elias, yet, when he comes down into the midst of the crowd, he doth not disdain the cry of the poor man, not refuse to touch him who was possessed with a devil. Observe my Masters condescension, for he deigns attention, and yet his manner softens into pity and presently it melts into a gracious sympathy, as if this was the only channel through which his peerless power could flow. Then remember, he is the same to-day as he was then.

"Now though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great:"—

He is willing now to receive sinners as when it was said of him, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them:" just as ready to receive you, poor sinners, as when he was called "The friend of publicans and sinners." Come to him. Bow at his feet. His love invites you still. Believe that the transfigured and glorified Jesus is still a loving Saviour, willing to pardon and forgive.

Once again what choice instruction there is in history! After Jesus had been absent for some time, he came back. You may ask for what purpose he had retired? Evidently he went up into the mountain to pray. It was while he was praying (and I make no doubt, fasting likewise) that the fashion of his countenance changed. By his own personal devotion, and by the Father's special revelation, he had thus come back, as it were, with great refreshment to carry on his ministry. Hence we become witnesses of a marvelous power which he immediately showed forth, and of no less remarkable counsel which he spoke to his disciples, when they felt their own weakness. Thus we have before us, on our text, a peculiar case—a patient, who utterly baffled the skill of all his disciples, healed at once by the great Master; and we have a reason given why the apostles themselves were not able to deliver him.

Let us look for a little time at *this very sad case*; not so singular either, methinks, but that we may find the round about us. Then let us notice *the scene around the case*—the father, the disciples, the scribes. Afterwards we shall joyfully observe *the Saviour's coming into the midst and deciding all the difficulty*; and, lastly, we shall attend to the reason he gives in private to his disciples, why they, *before his coming, were utterly powerless to achieve the work*.

I. First we have before us a VERY PECULIAR CASE.

It appears that the disciples had cast out devils of all sorts. Wherever they had gone, heretofore, this was their uniform testimony, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us;" but now they are baffled. They seem to have encountered a devil of the worst kind. There are grades in devilry as there are in human sin. All men are evil, but all men are not alike evil. All devils are full of sin, but they are not all sinful to the same degree. Do we not read in Scripture, "Then goeth he and taketh unto him seven other spirits more wicked than himself?" It may be there is a gradation in the wickedness of devils, and perhaps, also, in their power to fulfil their wicked impulses. We can

scarcely think that all devils are Satans. There seems to be one chief arch-spirit, one great Diabolus, who is an accuser of the brethren—one mighty Lucifer, who fell down from heaven and has become the prince of the powers of darkness. In all his hosts it is probable that there is not his like. He stands first and chief of those fallen morning stars; the rest of the spirits may stand in different grades of wickedness, a hierarchy of hell. This poor wretch seems to have been possessed of one of the worst, most potent, and violent, and virulent of these evil spirits. I believe, brethren, that here we have a picture of a certain class of individuals who are not only desperately sinful, but subject to extraordinary impulses which carry them to infernal lengths and depths of infamy; they are incapable of restraint, a terror to their kinfolk, and a misery to themselves. All men are sinful, as I have said before; but the power of depravity in some men is much stronger than in others; at least, if it be not intrinsically stronger, yet it certainly has manifestations in some which we have never perceived in common among men. Let us try and pick out the case according to the narrative. How frequently, dear friends, too frequently, alas! have we seen young people who have answered to the description here given. They have had a precocity of wickedness. When Jesus asked the father, “How long has he been in this way?” the answer was, “Of a child.” I remember having once known such a child, over whom, paroxysms of passion came, in which his face would turn black. When he was able to run about, and was sent to a public school, a flint-stone, a club, a brick-bat, anything which might come next to hand, he would throw, without a moment’s thought, at any one who vexed him. His knife would be drawn from his pocket and opened in an instant. The young assassin has often been prevented from stabbing others by a careful hand and watchful eye which guarded him. We have noticed this, I say, in the very young. They begin to lie early and to thief soon, and the young lip even assays to swear, while the anxious mother cannot understand where the child could have learnt it. You have protected such a child from contamination, and seemed to shut him in and girdle him about with holy influences; and yet, in these desperate instances, as soon as ever the child could know the right from the wrong, he has deliberately chosen the wrong with a violence of self-will and recklessness of consequences altogether unusual. Some such cases we have seen. O, may God grant it never be your lot or mine, to be the parents of such children. Yet such there have been, and such men there are who have grown up now, and the youthful passions of their childhood have become developed; and you may find them with the low forehead and dark scowling eye, if you will, in our prison-houses. Or if you see them in the streets, you may hopefully wish that they may be in prison ere long, for they are unsafe abroad. Of a child they seem to have been possessed with the chief of devils, and to have been carried captive by him at his will.

This lad seems also to have been afflicted with what is here called lunacy, which was, indeed, only a form of epilepsy. He was constantly subjected, it seems, to epileptic fits; for I think we can hardly understand lunacy to mean anything short of occasional madness. Attacks of such outrageous violence would come upon him, that there would be no enduring him. He would then dash himself into the fire, or if water were near, he would attempt self destruction by plunging in to it. We have met with persons of this kind, perfectly outrageous and beyond all command, when fits of evil came upon them. I will instance cases which I have observed.

I know a man now, he may be here this morning; if he is, he will recognize his own portrait. At times he is as reasonable as anyone I could wish to associate with. He enjoys listening to the Word of God. He is, in some respects, an amiable, excellent, and respectable man. But occasionally fits of drunkenness come upon him, in which he is perfectly powerless under the influence of the demon; and while it lasts, it matters not, even when he knows he is wrong, a thousand angels could

not drag him from it. He is thrown into the water of self-destruction, and he will continue in it. You may urge him and reason with him, and you may think—oh, how often some have thought who love him!—he will never do that again; he is too sensible a man; he has been too well-taught; the Word of God has had such an effect upon him, that he will never do it again; yet he does; he repeats the old paroxysms, and has done for twenty or thirty years; and, if he lives, unless sovereign grace prevent it, he will die a drunkard, as sure as he is a living man, and go from his drink to damnation.

Another case, from which I likewise draw from life. The man is kind, tender, and generous—generous to a fault. He has a home—he *had* one, I ought to say—he had a home, and he was the light of it. No one ever suspected him—that is, in his better times—of any grievous faults; but sometimes—and this has been concealed by many an indulgent friend—an attack of lasciviousness comes upon him, and at such seasons it matters not what the temptation may be, nor how foul the vice may be, the man runs into it. If you should meet him in the street, and talk with him, and argue with him, it would be all time and labour thrown away; nay, I have known him break up his home, and cross the sea to go to another land, that he might indulge his vile passions without rebuke, or the restraint of associating with former friends. He will come back again, broken-hearted, wondering that he ever could be such a fool; but he will go again. It is in him. The devil is in him, and, unless God casts it out, he will do the same again, deliberately choosing his own damnation. Though he knows it, yet so possessed of the love of sin is he, that when the fit comes upon him, this diabolical epilepsy, he falls into sin with his whole might and power.

I might go on describing cases of the kind, but you will not need that I should picture any more; it could only be to vary the different forms of sin. However, let me try once more. A lad had as good a father as a child could have. He was bound apprentice. It became whispered in a few weeks that little moneys were missing. The father was very grieved, so indeed was the master, and the matter was quietly hushed up. A little while after the same thing occurred. The indentures were cancelled, and nothing more was said of it; but the father was sorely perplexed. He looked out for some other situation for the boy where he might, perhaps, recover his character. After a time it was precisely the same again. Bad companions had got hold of him, or rather, he had become a ringleader among other bad companions. Well, something else must be tried. It was tried. He has had twenty situations, and they have all been thrown up from the very same cause. And now, what think you is his treatment of his parents? Instead of being grateful for the repeated kindness and longsuffering shown to him, he will break out sometimes into such dreadful passions, that even the lives of his parents are scarcely safe; and when he has been in his old haunts a little more than usual, he is really so terrible a being, that his mother who loves him and who weeps over him, would almost as soon see a fiend from hell as see him; for when he comes home, everything goes wrong; confusion, is in the house, and terror in every heart; he acts precisely as if he were a madman. They have said, “Send him to Australia, or send him to America”—where they do send many of that sort—but if he goes there he will turn up, sooner or later, at the foot of the gallows; he is desperately set on evil, and nothing turns him aside. He tears and foams at the mouth with passion; his whole heart goes forth outrageously after anything like vice, and there appears to be not one redeeming trait in his character; or, if there be, it only seems to be subjected to the power of his lusts. He devises means to be more mighty to do mischief in the world.

What dreadful cases these are! Wherefore am I talking of them? Dear friends, I have taken them because it has been laying upon my heart to encourage and comfort you who are constrained

to carry a daily cross in having such relations and such children as these. It is one of the heaviest afflictions which can come upon you.

In the case before us, the child was both deaf and dumb—not, I suppose, through any organic effect, but through the epilepsy, and the Satanic possession. So often we have seen children—shall I look them in the face this morning, as I stand here?—they are no children now—who are positively deaf to all spiritual sounds. They have been pleaded with, but it is vain. They know the truth, they know the whole truth, but they do not know the power of it. They are never absent from family prayer, nor in any prayer are they ever forgotten by their parents. They come to this place; they attend our classes; they go to revival services. Now and then there is something like a little emotion, but it does not come to much; they are precisely similar to the deaf adder which cannot be charmed, charm we never so wisely. Others of the family have been converted. Nearly all the household has now been brought to Christ. Lydia has had her heart opened; God has been much pleased to call young Timothy; but this one remains, and after much anxiety, much effort, much labour, no good has been achieved. The adamant seems as soft as their heart, and the ear of the deaf as much alive to rebuke as their conscience. This again is a very sad case.

I meet sometimes, too, with cases of another kind—persons who are beset with very high doctrine, who have got the devil in them, puffing up their fleshly minds with a vain conceit of sound understanding, and degrading their carnal profession with a loathsome impurity of heart and life. You will talk with them; they will tell you they wish to be saved—would give their right arm to be saved; but it is not in their power. You bid them believe in Jesus. They have no sense, they tell you, of the need of a Saviour; they are not in a fit state to believe. When God's time comes, the thing will occur. They love high doctrine; they will hear nothing else but it; but then their Sunday, if there is a temptation which comes across their path, will be spent anywhere but in the worship of God; and during the week they give way to all sorts of sins. Whatever temptation comes, they go after it. The comfort they get from their religion, which they wrap about them like a cloak, is this—that no minister speaks the truth except one or two; that the truth is fatalism; that all they have to do is to be carried along like dead, inanimate logs down the stream, and that they are not at all responsible; or if they are responsible, it is merely to maintain with unflinching hardihood their own crude sentiments. I have seen some of these people—good people in their own way too—of whom I have thought that the conversation of drunkards was more hopeful than theirs; for that damnable fatalism, which by some is put instead of the predestination of the Scriptures, has locked them up—put them in an iron cage: and so they are beyond the reach of help, going on in their sin, rejecting the gospel of Christ, while assaying to be connoisseurs of its choicest mysteries.

Now, brothers and sisters, why are such cases as these permitted? Why doth the Lord allow the devil thus to fill the soul with sin?

I think it is, first, to show that there is a reality of sin. If we were all moral and outwardly respectable, we should begin to think sin was but a fancy. These daring sinners show the reality of it.

It is to manifest the reality of divine grace; for when these are saved, then it is we wonder, and we are compelled to say, "There is something in this. If such a hard, iron nature yet melts before the power of divine love, there must be a majesty in it."

It is to humble us too, to throw us on our back, and let us see how utterly powerless human agency is. When you cannot get in the thin end of the wedge, much less the whole wedge; when the ploughshare breaks on the edge of a hard rock; when the edge of the sword turns against the

armour, then it is to draw yourself out of self to God. You see it is a deadly evil, where only omnipotence can help. Your soul says, "Lord, put out thine arm! Now do it, and the glory shall be thine." This is probably the chief reason; it is in order that God may get great glory to himself. He lets the devil have it all his own way. "There," he says, "pick your own ground, fight in your own territory, manoeuvre in your own way, and, with a word, I will crush your power." He gives Satan great advantage, lets him entrench himself firmly in the soul from youth up, so that the victory may be splendid to the greatest degree.

We have thus before us now, for our sorrowful contemplation, the case of one whose disease mocks the physician, laughs at all human endeavours, and defies the watchful care of mild and gentle treatment to mitigate its force, or ameliorate its fearful symptoms.

II. Turn we now with passing glance, to LOOK AT THE SCENE AROUND. The company is made up of five sorts of people.

There are the scribes—cynics, methinks, to a man—"We told you so! We told you so!" they say. "Your Master pretended to give you power to cast out devils. No such thing! you cannot cast out devils. Those whom you healed were not truly possessed. Little enough was ever the matter with them, and so they got better. They were fanciful, and they believed you through enthusiasm. The dupes of credulity, your incantations bewitched them, and so they got better. But you cannot cast out a devil—you cannot cast that devil out." "Now then," says one of the scribes to Andrew, "cast it out. Come, Phillip, try what you can do!" And inasmuch as after all trying, the devil would not go out—"Ah! just so!" they say, "they are impostors. There is nothing in it" Just recall it, friends, to your own memories, have not you seen men of that kind? "Ah yes," they say, "the gospel converts one sort of people, such as always go to places of worship, the more intelligent and respectable of the community, but, you see, it is no good in these tough cases. These hardened ones—it cannot touch them. They are beyond its power." "Aha!" they say, "where is the boasted might of this great physician? He can heal your finger-aches; he does not know how to make these foul diseases fly."

Then here is the poor father, all dejected. "I brought him to you—I knew you did cast out devils, and I thought you could cast my son's devil out, and he would be healed. I am disappointed in you all. Yet I do think your Master can do it, but I am not sure that even he can. If such excellent apostles, as you are, have tried so hard, and have failed, I do not think there can be any chance for me. I am full of unbelief. O, I wish I had never brought my child here at all, to make a public spectacle of him, that he might be a witness to your failures." That is the poor father. Perhaps that poor father is here this morning and he is saying, "Ah, I do believe, but still I am full of unbelief. I have brought my daughter; I have brought my child under the sound of the Word; I have prayed, and wrestled with God in prayer, and my child is not saved." "I have brought my husband," says one good woman, "but he is just as full of Satan as he ever was. I must give it up in despair."

And then, there are the disciples, and they look pitiable indeed. "Well," they say, "we do not know how to account for it. We cannot tell you how it is. We have said the same in this case that we were wont to say in others." "Why" says one of them, "when I went abroad and just said 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command thee to come out of him,' the unclean spirit always did come out in every other case. I cannot comprehend this. I must give it up." "We all must give it up," says the apostles. For some unknown cause, this seems to be quite out of the catalogue of cases which we are commissioned to cure. And so we sometimes hear dejected ministers, after preaching long at such hard shells as these—they say, "Well, we cannot understand it. 'The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Oh, it must be that these are fore-ordained unto

damnation; we must give it up.” That is how unbelieving ministers talk—or at least the most part of ministers in their season of misgiving and chagrin.

But then there is the general crowd. They are neither this way nor that. They say they will see fair. “Come, clear the ring out. If Jesus Christ be not an impostor—if he be God—certainly he can heal this poor man.” Now here is the test and the ordeal, “If that man be not healed, we,” says the crowd, “will not believe; but, if he be, then we will believe that Jesus Christ is sent of God.” O dear friends, how often we have thought of those very hard cases in this way. There are hundreds of undecided people looking on and saying, “Ah, if So-and-so were converted, then I should say there was something in it. If truly we could have a new heart and a right spirit, then I, too, would turn to God with full purpose of heart.

There was the fifth party there, and that was the devil himself. Oh, how triumphant was he! “Ah!” he seemed to say, “try your exorcism; go on with your words; preach at him; pray at me; weep over me; do what you will, you cannot get me out.” There he seems to stand intrenched within the stronghold of the poor tortured heart. “Do your best, do your worst, I am not afraid of you. I have got this man, and I will keep him. I have so fixed myself in him that no power shall ever be able to heal him.” So we seem to hear that vile shriek of hell over some men, “Yes,” saith he, “I will trust him to go into Spurgeon’s Tabernacle. I know the thousands there have felt the power of the Holy Ghost in making new men of them, this is a case I can trust. There is nothing that will ever touch him. The great hammer has knocked the chains off many, but it cannot touch his chains; they are harder than iron. I have no fear for him;” and perhaps he is gloating his thoughts now with the torments of the man in another world. Ah, thou foul fiend! if our Master should come here this morning, thou shouldst sing another tune. if he should say, “Come out of him thou foul spirit,” thou wilt go back howling to thy vile den; for his voice can do what our voice never could have done. And may we not easily realize such a scene enacted in this congregation? You have the scoffers, you have the anxious parent, the ministry confessedly powerless in the matter; the crowd looking on, and the devil rejoicing that such cases are quite beyond human strength. What more can you want to vivify the picture before your imagination?

III. But look! THE MASTER COMES.

Ah! the master comes! Forthwith the scene changes. The lieutenants and the captains who began the battle did not understand the art of war; they were precipitant and hasty. The right wing was broken; the left began to reel; the centre almost fails. The trumpets of the adversary begin to sound a victory. Here they come—their dread artillery in front. What will become of the army now? Hold! Hold! What is that I see? A cloud of dust. Who comes galloping there? It is the commander-in-chief. “What are you at?” says he, “What are you at?” In a moment he sees this is not the way to fight. He comprehends the difficulties of the case in an instant. “Forward there! Forward There! Backward there!” The scale is turned. The mere presence of the commander-in-chief has changed the whole face of the field; and now, ye adversaries, ye may turn your backs and fly. It was so in Jesus’ case exactly. His lieutenants and captains—the apostles—had lost the day. He comes into the field; comprehends the state of the case. “Bring him hither to me,” says he, and the poor wretch, foaming and tormented, is brought to him, and he says, “Come out of him, thou unclean spirit.” The thing is done; the victory achieved; the undecided receive Christ as a prophet; the scoffers’ mouths are shut; the trembling father rejoices, and the poor demoniac is cured.

And yet when Jesus Christ came to cure this poor man, he was in as bad a state as he well could be. Nay, the very presence of the Saviour seemed to make it worse. As soon as ever the devil

perceived that Christ was come he began to rend and tear his poor victim. As quaint old Fuller says—like a bad tenant whose lease is out, he hates the landlord, and so he does all the damage he can, because he has got notice to quit. Often just before men are converted, they are worse than ever; there is an unusual display of their desperate wickedness, for then the devil hath great wrath, now that his time is short.

The struggles of this child are appalling. The devil seemed as if he would kill him before he would be healed; and after great paroxysms of the most frightful kind, the poor youth laid upon the ground, pale, and still as a corpse, insomuch that many said, “He is dead.” It is just the same with many conversions of these desperate sinners. Their convictions are so terrible; frequently the work of the devil within them keeping them from Christ is so furious that you would give up all hope. You say, “That man will be driven mad; those acute feelings, the intense agony of his spirit will rob him of all mental power, and then in abject persecution he will die in his sin.” Ah! dear friends, this again is only a piece of Satan’s infamy. He knew, and knew right well that Christ would set that poor young man free, and therefore he sets upon him with all his might, to torment him while he may. Have I any such desperate case among my hearers this morning—one who has been as a son of Belial among the children of men? Is the devil tormenting you to-day? Do you feel tempted to commit suicide? Are you urged to some freak of yet greater sin in order to drown your griefs and strangle your conscience? O poor soul, do no such thing, for my Master will soon stoop over you, and take you by the hand and lift you up, and your comfort shall begin, because the unclean spirit is cast out. “Ah! he means to destroy me,” says the soul under conviction. Nay, soul, God does not destroy those whom he convinces of sin. Men do not plough fields which they have no intention to sow. If God ploughs you with conviction he will sow you with gospel comfort, and you shall bring forth a harvest of his glory. As a woman at her work first plies the needle with its sharp prick, and then draws the thread after it, so in your case the sharpness of sorrow for sin will be speedily followed by the silver thread of joy and peace in believing.

And oh, mark it! The vision just now, up there on the mountain of glory, resolved itself into “Jesus only.” His peerless radiance eclipsed every other. So, too, it is “Jesus only,” down there in the valley. His matchless grace can encounter no rival. Keep this forever in your mind’s eye—it is the Master who did it all. His appearance on the scene removed all difficulties. In such extreme cases, there will be, and there must be, a most eminent display of God’s power; and that power may be unassociated with means. Under any circumstances, it will be the Lord alone doing it, to the praise and glory of his grace.

IV. Now, we come to the last, and perhaps the most important part of the sermon. The riddle is perplexing. “WHY COULD NOT WE CAST HIM OUT?” Let the Master tell us the reasons why these cases thwart our power.

The Saviour said it was for want of faith—want of faith. No man may expect to be the means of the conversion of a sinner without having faith which leads him to believe that the sinner will be converted. Such things may occur, but it is not the rule. If I can preach in faith that my hearers will be saved, they will be saved. If I have no faith, God may honour his Word, but it will be in no great degree; certainly he will not honour me. Abandoned sinners, if converted by means, are usually brought under the power of divine grace through ministers of great faith. Have you observed—there were persons who heard all the small fry of the Whitefieldian age; they had listened to this preacher and to that. Under whom were they converted? Under Mr. Whitefield, because Mr. Whitefield was a man of masterly faith. He believed that the lost could be reclaimed—that the worst diseases could

be healed, the most heinous, abandoned, profligate, blasphemous sinners could be saved. He preached to them as if he expected the deaf would be charmed by the gospel melody, and the dead would be quickened at the commanding call of the great Redeemer's name. At Surrey Chapel, over yonder, in Rowland Hill's day, some of the grossest blackguards and biggest scamps who ever infested London, were saved. Why? Because Rowland Hill preached the gospel to big sinners, and believed the fact of big sinners being converted. The respectable people of his day said, "Oh, yes! it is only tag, rag, and bob-tail who go to hear Mr. Hill." "Just so," said Mr. Hill, "and welcome tag, and welcome rag, and welcome bob-tail; they are the very people that I want" "What is the good of such people as they are, going to hear the gospel? Why does Mr. Hill try to preach to harlots and thieves?" they said. "They are just the very people," said Mr. Hill. "I believe that these people can be saved." It was want of faith in the others; for if a man have faith as a grain of mustard seed, let it be ever so little, yet, if it is true, it is mighty in proportion to its power. Mr. Hill had the power of faith, and he was the means of the conversion of very great sinners. A few years ago it was utterly hopeless to try and reclaim fallen daughters of sin, but a few men had faith that it could be done, and it has been done; and I will now make bold to say that if there be a great sinner here, such as I tried to describe just now, some gross case of infernal possession, if that person be not saved, it is for the want of faith in our case. If we have brought that person before God, and have not been anxious about his salvation, and God has not heard that prayer, it is because we could not believe it possible such a case could be saved. If God gives you the power to believe that any soul will be saved, it will be saved; there is no doubt about that.

Still, our Saviour added, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." What does he mean by that? I believe he meant that in these very special cases ordinary preaching of the Word will not avail, and ordinary prayer will not suffice. There must be an unusual faith, and to get this there must be an unusual degree of prayer; and to get that prayer up to the right point, there must be, in many cases, fasting as well. No doubt there is something special about the admonition to prayer, from the association in which it stands. One sort of Christian will use formal supplications; and the petitions they ask are founded upon a sense of propriety, without any glow of feeling. Another sort will wait for the Spirit to move them; and when certain impulses stimulate their minds, they rejoice in a sense of liberty. Yet I show you a more excellent way There be those who watch unto prayer, wait before the Lord, seek his face, and exercise patience till they get an audience. Such disciples continue in their retirement until they have an experience of access for which they crave.

And what is fasting for? That seems to be the difficult point. It is evidently accessory to the peculiar continuance in prayer, practised oftentimes by our Lord, and advised by him to his disciples. Not a kind of religious observance, in itself meritorious, but a habit, when associated with the exercise of prayer, unquestionably helpful. I am not sure whether we have lost a very great blessing in the Christian Church by giving up fasting. It was said there was superstition in it; but, as an old divine says, we had better have a spoonful of superstition than a porringer full of gluttony. Martin Luther, whose body, like some others, was of a gross tendency, felt as some of us do, that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing, in another sense than the apostle meant it; and he used to fast frequently. He says his flesh was wont to grumble dreadfully at abstinence, but fast he would, for he found that when he was fasting, it quickened his praying. There is a treatise by an old Puritan, called, "The soul fattening institution of fasting," and he gives us his own experience that during a fast he has felt more intense eagerness of soul in prayer than he had ever done at any other time.

Some of you, dear friends, may get to the boiling point in prayer, without fasting. I do think that others cannot, and probably if we sometimes set apart a whole day for prayer for a special object, we should at first feel ourselves dull, and lumpish, and heavy. Then let us resolve, "Well, I shall not go down to my dinner. I shall stop here. I feel anxious for a praying frame of mind, and I will keep alone; and if when the time for evening meal came on, we should say, "I feel a little craving of hunger, but I will satisfy them with some very slender nutriment—a piece of bread, or something of the kind—and I will continue in prayer," I think that very likely towards evening our prayers would become more forcible and vehement than at any other part of the day. We do not exactly recommend this for those who are weak. There are some men with little or no encumbrance of flesh about them; but others of us of a heavy make, with sluggishness for a temptation, have to cry out because we are rather like stones on the ground than birds in the air. To such, I think, we can venture to recommend it from the words of Christ. At any rate, I can suppose a father here setting apart a day of prayer, going on wrestling with God without any intermission; pleading with him till, as it was said of the famous martyr of Brussels, he would so pray that he forgot everything except his prayer; and when they came to call him to meat, he made no answer, for he had got out of all earthly things in his wrestling with the angel, that he could not think of anything besides. Such a man taking up the case of a gross sinner, I believe, would be the means of that sinner's conversion; and the reason why some are never brought to Christ, is, speaking after the manner of men, because we have not got the qualified to deal with them; for "this kind goeth not out save with prayer and fasting." When we have prayed, and have reached the point of true faith, then the sinner is saved by the mighty power of God, and Christ is glorified. Methinks I have some in this house who are ready to say, "Well, if such be the case, I will try it. I will take the Master at his word." Brother, brother, if half-a-dozen of us joined together, it might be better; nay, "If two agree as touching any one thin," it would be done. Let some of us put it to the test upon some big sinner, and see whether it does not come true. I think I may fairly ask you who are lovers of souls, who have eyes which do weep, and hearts which can feel, to try my Master's prescription, and see if the most unmanageable devil which ever took possession of a human heart, be not driven out, as the result of prayer and fasting, in the exercise of your faith. The Lord bless you in this thing, and may he bring us all to trust in Jesus by a saving faith. To him be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Ship on Fire—A Voice of Warning

A Sermon

(No. 550)

Delivered on Sunday Evening, November 8th, 1863, on the burning of the Ship "Amazon," by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Escape for thy life."—Genesis 19:17.

"Thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life."—Genesis 19:19.

HERE IS THE ALARM of mercy declaring the sinner's duty—"*Escape for thy life.*" Here is the work of grace, and the gratitude of the sinner after he is saved. "*Thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life.*"

The other day, there sailed down the Thames as stout a vessel as had ever ploughed the deep. The good ship "Amazon," had sailed the broad Pacific many a time, and what is there to hinder her from once more reaching America in safety? Who would refuse to underwrite her? Who among her crew or passengers has a fear for her safety? But in the book of providence, there was a black line against that ship, and never more could she reach her desired haven. The wind was exceedingly high: the vessel tarried awhile at Gravesend. There was a little improvement in the weather: she sailed a little further; but cast anchor again, and remained off Broadstairs. Matters went as usual in such weather. Night came on; the watch was changed as usual; the captain turned in, feeling that all was right and safe. The passengers were snug in their berths—a little the worse, perhaps, for the roll of the ship, but as assured of security as men could be. In a moment, what a change had taken place! A passenger perceives a smell of fire; the warning cry is raised. Everyone rushes upon deck. Attempts are made to quench the fire; but when the hatches are lifted up, the wind rushes in, and the fire is fanned to a dreadful, all-devouring conflagration. Further effort is of no avail. Rockets are fired, as the signals of distress. The boats are let down, crowded with the passengers. A lugger puts off to her, and a steam-tug hastens to the rescue, and, thanks be unto the God of providence, all the passengers—the captain and chief officers last—are on board the vessels and carried to Margate, where they see the melancholy, and yet satisfactory spectacle of their vessel burning to the water's edge, and then disappearing from view.

Now, as the good brother who was captain to that vessel, constantly comes here when he is on shore, and as he is sitting in the midst of you to-night, I thought I might use the burning of this vessel as a picture of spiritual things, out of which I might make an illustrated sermon. These things happen not without design, and should not escape without improvement.

Two things, then, to-night: they are both in the text and in the story of the ship on fire. First, *an alarm*—"Escape for thy life;" secondly, *grateful acknowledgment*—"Thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life."

I. First, AN ALARM.

We come here to-night, to raise an alarm. True ministers of God. are great alarmists. It is their duty to be like Barnabas, who was a son of consolation; but it is equally their duty to be like

Boanerges—sons of thunder. Thunder does not rock men to sleep, and plays no pleasant tune for fools to dance to; with its crash and roar, it wakes a slumbering world, and its dread volleys, echoed peal on peal, afford no dulcet notes for dainty ears. God's servants should learn to thunder; for when God speaketh through them, the voice of the Lord is powerful and full of majesty; and in his temple doth everyone speak of his glory.

The alarm we have to give to-night, is that of the angel to Lot, with an emphasis of meaning—"Escape for thy life." It is an alarm *suggested by tremendous danger*. When the cry of "Fire! fire! fire!" ran along the decks, and the cabins, and the saloons of the "Amazon," everyone knew that there was no small danger to be encountered, for flame is a cruel tyrant and devours remorselessly. The very word "Fire!" has a razor-edge about it, cutting to the very quick. Terror has fire for her first-born. But the alarm we have to raise, is concerning a matter more terrific still—add to the word "Fire," that dreadful syllable "Hell," and then what shall more alarm than "*Hell fire?*" In that cry, we comprehend such weighty matters as eternity alone can reveal. The wrath to come! The judgment of the Eternal! The wrath of the Most High! Fire, when it is at its most furious pitch, is but a plaything compared with hell fire; yea, when it consumes a city; when it runs down the red lips of a volcano, and buries thousands; when it sets the sky and earth upon a blaze as in Egypt's plagues, it is but child's-play compared with the wrath of God, and that Tophet which is prepared of old, the pile whereof is wood and much smoke. Here is something at which the joints of a man's loins may well be loosed, for there is eternity in it, infinity in it, deity in it; and where these three are set against a man, woe unto him. It is as when the fire is set in battle array against the stubble. Well may it be written by the prophet, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning?" Sinner, by the crushing terror of the woe which cometh, I beseech thee, "Escape for thy life."

It is a danger not to be overcome. The fire-engine was brought out upon the deck of the burning ship; attempts were made to extinguish the fire; but the mischief was far too much in power to be driven from its stronghold. The like may be boldly declared of the evil which cometh upon the ungodly. Sinner, your danger is such that you cannot contend with it by any power of your own. There is a fire of sin within you which you cannot quench; there is a fire of hell without you which no drops even of your own blood shall be able to extinguish. You are in a danger which you are unable to cope with. There is no possibility that if you remain in it, your utmost exertions or most strenuous efforts can avert the certain ruin which your state must bring upon you. If you neglect the only way of salvation, how can you escape? What awaits you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation? The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at the reproof of the Lord of hosts—how, then, canst thou endure the tempest of his anger, and the fury of his hot displeasure?

"O sinner, seek his face,
Whose wrath thou canst not bear;
Fly to the dying Savior's wounds,
And find salvation there."

It is a danger, too, a terrific danger *which makes no exception to anyone*. The captain is as much in danger as the poorest cabin-boy, if he cannot escape from the burning ship. The rich man, with ingots of gold in his cabin, will as certainly be burned alive as the poor traveler who could scarcely pay his passage. There is no distinction of persons in the judgments of God. Sinner, you may be

great and mighty, but you shall go down to hell unless grace shall save you. Woman, thou mayst be amiable in thy temper and excellent in thy deportment, but thou shalt perish as surely as a harlot, unless Christ have pity upon thee. Man, thou mayst be upright, and shine before thy fellow-merchants as one of excellent repute, but the wrath of God abideth on thee except thou fleest to Jesus; for there is none other name given under heaven whereby ye must be saved; and out of that name, and apart from that name, whoever thou mayst be, though thou wert monarch of seven empires, thou art still in danger. Rich and poor, high and low, learned and ignorant, my cry is to you all, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord!"

Do not forget that we are in danger of *a consuming fire*—a danger which kills without remedy. It is not a fire which merely singes and scorches, but a fire which burns to ashes. As yonder ship must be burned up, and every passenger who cannot leave its burning deck must be consumed, so you, O unconverted men, are in danger of utter destruction from the presence of the Lord. "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." I would I could speak upon this dreadful subject in a proper manner. Whitfield had tones and emotions which were fitting for such a subject. He would cry out, "Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" He would cry, I say, until all his hearers responded with, "What must we do to be saved?" And good Baxter, trembling lest he should be guilty of men's blood, while he delivered the message, as a dying man to dying men—knew the terrors of the law, and right earnestly he persuaded men to escape for their lives. O sirs, if I saw you in a burning house, there were not half so much need of earnestness as when I see you in the midst of a mass of sin and corruption which must be consumed by God's anger, and you with it. Sinner, why wilt thou die? What can ail thee? What besots thee that thou dost not perceive anything dreadful in the wrath of him who made thee? He can dash whole worlds to pieces—what can he not do with thee? Hast thou learned to be callous when thou hearest of eternity? Hast thine ear grown cold to that dreadful word, "Condemnation?" Canst thou read the story of those to whom he said, "Depart, ye cursed," and not tremble? Canst thou know that thou art this day in danger of the judgment, and not be afraid? When the sword is sharp, and furbished, and taken out of its sheath, canst thou play about its edge? Canst thou yet make mirth? Then is there indeed, need for me to cry to thee, and for all God's faithful ministers to cry with louder voice than mine—"Escape! escape! escape for thy life."

The alarm of fire was needed because of *the security of the persons in danger*. Many on board the "Amazon" were sound asleep. Oh, how dreadful to be awakened out of sleep with the cry of "Fire! fire! fire! Some of them, when they awoke, seemed to have been so startled and so confused, that they had fairly to be dragged out of their berths that they might be rescued. There were none there, we have reason to believe, who would have been kept below through their own drunkenness or the carelessness of the crew. They were in a right state, with this exception, of course, that they were all alarmed—and men alarmed are not always ready to do the wisest thing, and as for the captain and his men they seem to have been as sensible as they were brave. My hearers, God's ministers have to deal with passengers much more difficult to handle. Are not men asleep? Till the voice of God awakens us, we are all asleep. How you and I walked for years, and years, and years, upon the brink of the grave, as utterly unconcerned as though we were to live for ever; and when sometimes we were a little impressed by the passing bell, or an open grave, or an earnest sermon, how soon we went back again to our old frivolity, and toyed with the flames of hell as though they

were fancy's dream. It is not so now. God has awakened us; but we had never been awakened if the voice which awakes the dead had not cried in our ear, "Escape for thy life." Nay, worse, men are not only asleep, but when they do perceive their danger, they love their sins too well to leave them, even though hell stares them in the face. The best of them cry with Solomon's sluggard, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Sinner, how hard it is to bring thee to serious consideration of thy ways. We cannot touch thy wits, or make thee reason like a man of sound mind. Thou wilt sooner be damned by thoughtlessness than give an hour's careful meditation to thy soul's affairs. We would fain drag thee out of thy sleeping berth, and even kick thee and strike thee, treating thee to rough usage, if we could by this means drag thee from the devouring flames; thou wouldst thank us well enough afterwards for these rough cuffs, if we could but wake thee. We hear complaints that the minister speaks too harshly and talks too much of judgment. Saved sinners never make that complaint. They know that nothing but these terrors will awaken some slumbering minds; and if they be awakened themselves, they are but too glad, however rough the means may have been. Are there not some in this house to-night who are hard, fearfully hard, to be brought to sober thinking, because they are drunken and besotted with sin? Some of you, with your Sunday trading, will rather gain your sixpences and your paltry pence on the Sunday, than find eternal felicity in faith in the Lord Jesus. Others of you, with your tap-room companions, with your theatres, your balls, and worse places still, where lust wears no mask, are cutting the throats of your poor miserable souls. You cannot give up your vices; you will sooner be damned than be Christians. Well, so it must be, sirs, if ye will have these things, and will pawn your souls for them, so it must be; you have chosen your own delusions, and you shall inherit them. But O, do listen once more, while we warn you in God's name, "Escape for thy life," and trifle no more with hell and heaven, with thine own soul and judgment, God and his dear bleeding Son. If every preacher in London should suddenly begin to preach nothing but alarms, it would all be needed, for what a secure and reckless city is this. If every corner in the street had a Jonah in it, and that Jonah's sermon were nothing but this—"Yet a few more days and thou shalt be destroyed!" it were not too much for a city so given to slumber. We have waxen rich; we have grown careless, till we have become like Nineveh of old, a people at ease, and dwelling carelessly Isaiah might well say concerning London—"Thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it." Let us take heed unto ourselves lest in the world to come this carnal security of ours should be like faggots to the fire, and the remembrance of our sloth should pour oil upon the flames. O God, let the alarm be heard, to-night by those who crowd this house, for thou knowest that many of them are sound asleep.

Again, it is an alarm which *requires instant attention*. A man on board a vessel, when he hears the cry of "Fire!" must not stop to arrange his clothes; he must not be concerned to see that his face is washed, that he has bound together that little bundle of papers, or packed up the portmanteau, or counted over the little purse of gold, or even snatched his little property from the cabin. At once, at once, must he climb the stairs and reach the deck, or he will never have stairs to climb, nor feet to climb with. Now or never. Quick is the word. Waste a moment, and it is all over with you; the fire is upon you, for it tarries not in its march. So is it with you to-night who fear not God. "Escape for thy life," is a cry for the present moment. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Now, *now*, NOW. This is the only period God has allotted to you, take care that you use it, lest when your *to-days* are past, and you hope to see your *to-morrow*, you should have to spend your to-morrows in the pit of hell. Procrastination is not only the thief of time, but the thief

of souls. *Now* is the day of salvation; I have never heard of any other day. I do not know, but I think this is one of the most difficult things in the gospel ministry, a matter worthy of the Holy Ghost's power—to make men seriously think about their souls at this present. I know, young man, you intend to think of these things when you are ill; you expect to have a long time upon a sick-bed, and then you suppose all will be right before you die. Who told you you would ever lie upon a sick-bed at all? Yours may be a sudden death; and sudden death to such as you, are would be sudden damnation. As men stand upon the bank, and spring head-first into the water, so may you dash into hell. Death enters men's doors without knocking. The judgment may follow on the heels of your next sins. And what if you *should* lie upon a bed of sickness? You will have enough to do to bear the pain, to mourn over your weeping wife, and worry yourself about those little children who will be left fatherless: I tell you, sir, it is hard repenting upon a dying bed. Do not sew pillows to thine armholes, and make for thyself this fond hope, that thou shalt one day be saved. It is *now* or *never*, it is *now* or *never* with you. I speak as a prophet of God at this moment, I know I do; there are some of you to whom this *now* or *never* is a more applicable thing than you suppose. You will not see a new year. No Christmas festivities will be yours. You will be at home on Christmas-day, but it will be your long, lost home. "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, thus saith the Lord unto some of you—"There is but a step between you and death." Be warned, then, for as I will meet you on the other side the stream, at my Master's judgment-seat, I have bidden you give immediate, instantaneous attention to the Word of God. Consider your ways, O sinners, born to die. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O trembler, and thou shalt be saved. Trust him, trust him. God help thee to trust Jesus to-night, for it is *now* or *never* with thy soul.

Again, this alarm *demands of every one of us who are unsaved, an undivided attention*. You have fifty things to think about. You tell me you have a thousand cares. O sirs, a man whose life is in danger, has no other care than to save his life. Did those who were rescued from the "Amazon," have time to save their money and their gold? We are told that they were utterly destitute when they landed at Margate, and what signifies it? Would not a flush of joy be on their cheeks because their lives were preserved! If one said to his fellow, "Where is thy purse?" "Oh," saith the other, "never mind my purse, I am in the lifeboat; my life is saved." What shall it profit you, if you gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? And what is the loss after all, if you lose the world, if you gain your soul? Nay, those on board the ship had not time to save their clothes. The instincts of self-preservation made them run, just as they were, half-naked, to the vessel's deck, and so must you. I know you will tell me you are not living to make money; if you could just make ends meet, keep your family, and supply the wants of your children—that is all—are you not to think of this? It is well and good; far be it from me to discourage prudent carefulness in all matters; it is your business to see to temporal matters, but still your paramount business must be your soul; even necessities must not come between your soul and your most serious thoughts. You must see to this first and foremost, and remember there is a promise about it—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Those persons who escaped from the blazing vessel had, some of them, even to suffer in body. We read of one who broke his arm in the medley of the escape, but what of that? (*I hear since, from the friends of the second mate, that the man did not break his arm.) Better to escape with a broken arm, than fry in those horrible flames with every bone in its place. It would be very little comfort to the poor passenger to save his bones entire, and to have his body consumed. "It is better for thee to enter into life halt

or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." You are rightly considerate of your bodies, but still, if that poor body, which is to become worm's meat one day, is worthy of so much thought, how much more ought you to give to your immortal spirit, which is to live for ever with God in glory, or with fiends in torment? Think first, I pray you, think chiefly, think now to-night with undivided heart, with consecrated thought upon your soul. Let comforts go, let pelf go, let raiment go, let life itself go—but do see to that which is better than life—thy soul—thine everlasting destiny.

Now, the alarm which I have tried to give—"Escape for thy life!" seems to me to suggest a very solemn question. "How can I escape?" says cue. Dost thou sincerely ask that question—"What must I do to be saved?" Remember there is but one way of rescue—the lifeboat of faith must put thee into the vessel of salvation—Christ Jesus. Stop in thine own vessel, and thou art burned; leap into those floods of wrath, and thou art drowned; get into that boat of saving faith, let that boat bear thee into the vessel of Christ Jesus, and thou art safe. Sinner, the road of salvation is, out of self into Christ. There are only two steps to heaven—out of self, into Christ. That man who has left himself as a burning vessel behind, left sin and left self-righteousness as a thing to be destroyed—that man who has taken Christ to be his all in all, and takes the cross to be the only thing to which he clings, is safe. Escape, I pray thee, for thy life, awakened and seeking sinner, for Jesus is the only foundation, he only is thy rock and thy salvation; come to him for shelter, and you are saved.

To conclude this matter of alarm, our meditation arouses a very solemn enquiry—*Will all be safe?* Will all in the vessel escape? What joy must there have been in the captain's heart when he heard that not one had been left to burn in the vessel! Will all escape? Will every hearer in this huge house of prayer to-night be a singer in heaven? Dare we, in the judgment of charity, hope so? Well, well, let us try to hope, if so your charity wishes it, but I fear me, I fear me it will be hope without any grounds; for there are some here who love the drunkard's cup, others who vomit the swearer's oaths, and some who have the proud, self-righteous look which God hateth. O that we could hope that these would be transformed by grace through Jesus Christ, that so they might be saved! I am, I own it, very much afraid that all of you will *not* be saved, but that some of you will perish in your iniquities. It is not, however, our duty to pry into futurity, let us therefore, turn to that which far more concerns us, our own personal salvation. The enquiry changes—"Shall I be saved? If there be an alarm given, 'Escape for thy life!' Shall I be saved?" And what if it should be the preacher's lot to be lost for ever! What, if after talking to you this morning of being sick of love to Christ, he should have to hear those doleful words, "I never knew you, depart, ye cursed!" And what if this were to be the lot of the church-officers who sit around me, or of any one amongst you? Brother, you have passed the sacramental cup to others, what if the cup of devils be your portion for ever and ever! My brethren and sisters in Church fellowship, you may well put the question as did the apostles of old, "Lord is it I?"

"Shall I be banished for my life,
And yet forbid to die?
Shall I endure eternal death,
Yet death for ever fly?"

Shall it be so! My dear hearer, thou who makest no profession of religion, will you ask the question, Shall I, shall I perish in devouring flames, or shall I escape? The answer to that question, so far as you are concerned, at this moment, must depend upon whether there is now a work of grace in your heart. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, thou canst never perish. If thou dost

not, and wilt not believe, thy destruction is most sure. O God Almighty, thou who alone canst impress the heart, lead everyone of us now to take such sure hold of Christ that we may never perish, neither may any pluck us out of his hand.

II. My time is fled, woe is me, when I had meant to have spoken with my whole heart upon another topic. It was GRATITUDE. Well, we will just run over the points, although most briefly. I will hope that you and I are saved; I will trust that we have been put into thy grace-vessel; I will believe that we have laid hold on Christ; may me belief be warranted by facts? Then this calls for gratitude. Gratitude of what kind? Gratitude *that I was awakened*. O my God, I bless thee that I was not permitted to sleep the sleep of death. I thank thee for that fever which made me fear, that loss which made me think, that dear dead babe which brought the parent to a Savior's feet. I bless thee, Lord, for the minister's earnest voice which shook me in my slumbers, for a mother's tears which fell like cold drops on my sleeping brow, and made me wake. I thank thee, O God, that though others slumber, yet, thou hast awakened me, and made me look to my soul's concerns. It is no slight mercy to be able to hear the trumpet of warning. It is a foundation mercy, but it is not the least of mercies to have an awakened conscience.

Secondly, I would thank God, and let every believer join with me, that when you and I were awakened, *the ship was not out to sea*. If the "Amazon" had been far out to sea when the cry of "Fire" was given, what must have been the result? How few could have escaped! But there she was, close to land. You and I, when we were awakened, were not in hell—not like the rich man, lifting up our eyes where hope could never come—we were still on praying ground, still on pleading terms with God, still off the Foreland, still where mercy could come to us, and grace could meet us. Sinner, if you have been awakened to-night, thank God for this, thank him that the trumpet which wakes you is not the trumpet of the archangel summoning you to judgment, but the silver trumpet of God's messenger of mercy, inviting you to mercy banquet.

Let us thank God *it did not blow harder*, for there might have been much trouble in reaching the boat. When you and I were awakened to a sense of sin, it might have been just when death was coming, or when the terrors of conscience would have been too much for us, and when the fears of death might have kept us from a Savior. But, blessed be God, when we were aroused there was wind enough, we were conscience-stricken and smitten, but still not too much, or else the fire had been too vehement, and we had not escaped. Thank God, then, that he awakened us while there was really time to avail ourselves of the covenant lifeboat.

Let us be thankful again, that *we could use the signals*. I told you that the vessel sent up its rockets—signals of distress. Ah! what a thousand mercies it was that we could *pray*. I remember well when this was the only comfort my bursting spirit had, I could pray. Oh, to be on pleading terms with God! Thank God for this, awakened sinner, bless God for this. If you have not got so far as being completely saved, yet do praise him that you are allowed to fire off the rockets of desires, sighs, groans, sobs, tears, longings, and pantings, and that you can send them up where God can see them. Your cries, and groans, and tears will yet bring comfort and peace from heaven through the Lamb's redeeming blood. Rejoice, my beloved brethren, that the Lord has not abolished a mercy-seat, nor forgotten to be gracious. He saith "not to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." He waits to be gracious. He delighteth in mercy. Before you call he will answer, and while you are yet speaking he will hear.

Thank God that *there were good officers on board to direct the passengers*. Without firm authority, men become a mob, and then, with every appliance which might save, few are rescued.

Awakened sinner, be grateful that you have gospel ministers. Oh! what a mercy to have a gospel ministry! What an awful thing to sit under a half-and-half milk-and-water, yea-and-nay ministry, as was my lot when under conviction. I attended different places of worship, but what I heard was not the gospel. And I venture to say it, that a few years ago, in nine places out of ten in London, and in the suburbs, and throughout England, such a thing as the gospel was not preached, except by accident. It is preached NOW. It is not preached now as it should be, but it is preached *now*. What I mean by the gospel, is the doctrine that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that the simple trusting upon him is saving faith. This is a doctrine which the revival has brought up more clearly, and which the revival keeps before the public mind; but before that great movement came, it was a doctrine ignored and cast behind; too much of the preaching was a dry morality, or else philosophy which might tickle the ears of men who claimed intellect, but could never move the heart. Oh, thank God, poor sinner, that you do hear it rung in your ears—Come as you are! Come as you are! You hear the gospel sung to you:—

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd’st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
Just as I aim-thy love I own,
Has broken every barrier down:
Now, to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!”

We hold up to you no ceremonies, no feelings, no works, no orthodoxies; we only hold up Christ, Christ crucified, a substitute for sinners, a substitute for you if you trust him; and we tell you again and again, till we half fear of tiring you, that, trusting Jesus, you are saved. Now we have reason, if saved, to be grateful to God for gospel officers.

Then how grateful ought you and I to be that *the ship is come to the rescue*. Jesus came all the way from heaven to earth to save us—“Who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.” How shall we be grateful enough for this unspeakable gift?

“O, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior’s praises speak.”

Better still: how grateful we ought to be that *we have got on board that ship*. Oh! joy! joy! joy! that blessed step which set me upon Christ! that blessed act which made me one with him. My soul would repeat now that grace-wrought deed of faith.

“A wounded, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and confidence,
My Jesus and my all.”

Be grateful for this; and, sinner, if thou canst now step into Christ and trust him with thyself, make earth ring with thy joy, and make heaven resound with thy praise.

Our gratitude, methinks, will be greatest of all *when we get safe on shore*, and look on this old hulk, the burning world, without a fear; we, will see her blaze and cast her dreadful splendours over

the infinite leagues of space, until beings in far-off worlds shall ask, "What is this? A world on fire, whose elements dissolve with fervent heat." But we, caught up together with the Lord, to dwell for ever with him, shall look on with complacency, having lost nothing because saved in him; having found in him our Savior, better than all we had before, and being, once for all on heaven's *terra firma*, never to put to sea again, never to fear tempest, rock, wreck, or fire; but saved! saved! saved eternally!

Escape, sinner, escape for thy life. Remember, though thus I talk to thee, if thou shalt escape, free grace must have all the praise; and in the language of good Lot, thou wilt have to say—"Thou hast magnified thy mercy in saving my life." May God send you away with a blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Faith and Life

A Sermon

(No. 551)

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

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”—2 Peter 1:1-4.

THE two most important things in our holy religion are faith and life. He who shall rightly understand these two words is not far from being a master in experimental theology. Faith and life! these are vital points to a Christian. They possess so intimate a connection with each other that they are by no means to be severed; God hath so joined them together, let no man seek to put them asunder. You shall never find true faith unattended by true godliness; on the other hand, you shall never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root and foundation a living faith upon the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other! There be some who cultivate faith and forget holiness; these may be very high in orthodoxy, but they shall be very deep in damnation, in that day when God shall condemn those who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and make the doctrine of Christ to pander to their lusts. There are others who have strained after holiness of life, but have denied the faith; these are comparable unto the Pharisees of old, of whom the Master said, they were “whitewashed sepulchres;” they were fair to look upon externally, but inwardly, because the living faith was not there, they were full of dead men’s bones and all manner of uncleanness. Ye must have faith, for this is the foundation; ye must have holiness of life, for this is the superstructure. Of what avail is the mere foundation of a building to a man in the day of tempest? Can he hide himself among sunken stones and concrete? He wants a house to cover him, as well as a foundation upon which that house might have been built; even so we need the superstructure of spiritual life if we would have comfort in the day of doubt. But seek not a holy life without faith, for that would be to erect a house which can afford no permanent shelter, because it has no foundation on a rock—a house which must come down with a tremendous crash in the day when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon it. Let faith and life be put together, and, like the two abutments of an arch, they shall make your piety strong. Like the horses of Pharaoh’s chariot, they pull together gloriously. Like light and heat streaming from the same sun, they are alike full of blessing. Like the two pillars of the temple, they are for glory and for beauty. They are two streams from the fountain of grace; two lamps lit with holy fire; two olive-trees watered by heavenly care; two stars carried in Jesus’ hand. The Lord grant that we may have both of these to perfection, that his name may be praised.

Now, it will be clear to all, that in the four verses before us, our apostle has most excellently set forth the necessity of these two things—twice over he insists upon the faith, and twice over upon holiness of life. We will take the first occasion first.

I. Observe, in the first place, what he says concerning the *character and the origin of faith*, and then concerning *the character and origin of spiritual life*.

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” So far *the faith*. “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” These two verses, you see, concern the *spiritual life* which comes with the faith.

Let us begin where Peter begins, with the FAITH. You have here a description of true saving faith.

First, you have a description of its *source*. He says, “to them that *have obtained* like precious faith.” See, then, my brethren, faith does not grow in man’s heart by nature; it is a thing which is *obtained*. It is not a matter which springs up by a process of education, or by the example and excellent instruction of our parents; it is a thing which has to be obtained. Not imitation, but regeneration; not development, but conversion. All our good things come from without us, only evil can be educed from within us. Now, that which is *obtained* by us must be given to us; and well are we taught in Scripture that “faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.” Although faith is the act of man, yet it is the work of God. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;” but that heart must, first of all, have been renewed by divine grace before it ever can be capable of the act of saving faith. Faith, we say, is man’s act, for we are commanded to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and we shall be saved. At the same time, faith is God’s gift, and wherever we find it, we may know that it did not come there from the force of nature, but from a work of divine grace. How this magnifies the grace of God, my brethren, and how low this casts human nature! Faith. Is it not one of the simplest things? Merely to depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, does it not seem one of the easiest of virtues? To be nothing, and to let him be everything—to be still, and to let him work for me, does not this seem to be the most elementary of all the Christian graces? Indeed, so it is; and yet, even to this first principle and rudiment, poor human nature is so fallen and so utterly undone, that it cannot attain unto! Brethren, the Lord must not only open the gates of heaven to us at last, but he must open the gates of our heart to faith at the first. It is not enough for us to know that *he* must make us perfect in every good work to do his will, but we must be taught that *he* must even give us a desire after Christ; and when this is given, he must enable us to give the grip of the hand of faith whereby Jesus Christ becomes our Saviour and Lord. Now, the question comes (and we will try and make the text of today, a text of examination all the way through) have we obtained this faith? Are we conscious that we have been operated upon by the Holy Spirit? Is there a vital principle in us which was not there originally? Do we know today the folly of carnal confidence? Have we a hope that we have been enabled through divine grace to cast away all our own righteousness and every dependence, and are we now, whether we sink or swim, resting entirely upon the person, the righteousness, the blood, the intercession, the precious merit of our Lord Jesus Christ? If not, we have cause enough to tremble; but if we have, the while the apostle writes, “Unto them that have obtained like precious faith,” he writes to us, and across the

interval of centuries his benediction comes as full and fresh as ever, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you."

Peter having described the origin of this faith, proceeds to describe its *object*. The word "through" in our translation, might, quite as correctly, have been rendered "in"—"faith in the righteousness of our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." True faith, then, is a faith in Jesus Christ, but it is a faith in Jesus Christ *as divine*. That man who believes in Jesus Christ as simply a prophet, as only a great teacher, has not the faith which will save him. Charity would make us hope for many Unitarians, but honesty compels us to condemn them without exception, so far as vital godliness is concerned. It matters not how intelligent may be their conversation, nor how charitable may be their manners, nor how patriotic may be their spirit, if they reject Jesus Christ as very God of very God, we believe they shall without doubt perish everlastingly. Our Lord uttered no dubious words when he said, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and we must not attempt to be more liberal than the Lord himself. Little allowance can I make for one who receives Jesus the prophet, and rejects him as God. It is an atrocious outrage upon common sense for a man to profess to be a believer in Christ at all, if he does not receive his divinity. I would undertake, at any time, to prove to a demonstration, that if Christ were not God, he was the grossest impostor who ever lived. One of two things, he was either divine or a villain. There is no stopping between the two. I cannot imagine a character more evil than that which would be borne by a man who should lead his followers to adore him as God, without ever putting in a word by way of caveat, to stop their idolatry; nay, who should have spoken in terms so ambiguous, that two thousand years after his death, there should be found millions of persons resting upon him as God. I say, if he were not God, the atrocity of his having palmed himself upon us, his disciples, as God, puts aside altogether from consideration any of the apparent virtues of his life. He was the grossest of all deceivers, if he was not "very God of very God." O beloved, you and I have found no difficulties here; when we have beheld the record of his miracles, when we have listened to the testimony of his divine Father, when we have heard the word of the inspired apostles, when we have felt the majesty of his own divine influence in our own hearts, we have graciously accepted him as "the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father;" and, as John bear witness of him and said, "The Word was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God," even so have we received him; so that at this day, he that was born of the virgin Mary, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews, is to us "God over all, blessed for ever."

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honour and power divine:
And blessings more than we can give,
Be Lord for ever thine."

Now, beloved friends, have we heartily and joyfully received Jesus Christ as God? My hearer, if thou hast not, I pray thee seek of God the faith that saves, for thou hast it not as yet, nor art thou in the way to it. Who but a God could bear the weight of sin? Who but a God shall be the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Concerning whom but a God could it be said, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." We have to do with Christ, and we should be consumed if he changed; inasmuch, then, as he does not change, and we are not consumed, he must be divine, and our soul rolls the entire burden of its care and guilt upon the mighty shoulders of the everlasting God, who—

"Bears the earth's huge pillars up,

And spreads the heavens abroad.”

Remark in further dwelling upon the text, that the apostle has put in another word beside “God”, and that is, “of God and *our Saviour*.” As if the glory of the Godhead might be too bright for us, he has attempered it by gentler words “our Saviour.” Now, to trust Jesus Christ as divine, will save no man, unless there be added to this a resting in him as the great propitiatory sacrifice. Jesus Christ is our Saviour because he became a substitute for guilty man. He having taken upon himself the form of manhood by union with our nature, stood in the room, place, and stead of sinners. When the whole tempest of divine wrath was about to spend itself on man, he endured it all for his elect; when the great whip of the law must fall, he bared his own shoulders to the lash; when the cry was heard, “Awake, O sword!” it was against Christ the Shepherd, against the man who was the fellow to the eternal God. And because he thus suffered in the place and stead of man, he received power from on high to become the Saviour of man, and to bring many sons into glory, because he had been made perfect through suffering. Now, have we received Jesus Christ as *our Saviour*? Happy art thou, if thou hast laid thy hand upon the head of him who was slain for sinners. Be glad, and rejoice in the Lord without ceasing, if today that blessed Redeemer who has ascended upon high has become *thy* Saviour, delivered *thee* from sin, passing by *thy* transgressions, and making thee to be accepted in the beloved. A Saviour is he to us when he delivers us from the curse, punishment, guilt and power of sin, “He shall save his people from their sins.” O thou great God, be thou my Saviour, mighty to save.

But be pleased to notice the word “righteousness.” It is a faith in the *righteousness* of our God and our Saviour. In these days, certain divines have tried to get rid of all idea of atonement; they have taught that faith in Jesus Christ would save men, apart from any faith in him as a sacrifice. Ah, brethren, it does not say, “faith in the teaching of God our Saviour;” I do not find here that it is written, “faith in the character of God our Saviour, as our exemplar.” No, but “faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour.” That righteousness, like a white robe, must be cast around us. I have not received Jesus Christ at all, but I am an adversary and an enemy to him, unless I have received him as Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. There is his perfect life; that life was a life for me; it contains all the virtues, in it there is no spot; it keeps the law of God, and makes it honourable; my faith takes that righteousness of Jesus Christ, and it is cast about me, and I am then so beautifully, nay, so perfectly arrayed, that even the eye of God can see neither spot nor blemish in me. Have we, then, today a faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour? For no faith but this can ever bring the soul into a condition of acceptance before the Most High. “Why,” saith one, “these are the very simplicities of the gospel.” Beloved, I know they are, and, therefore, do we deal them out this morning, for, thanks be to God, it is the simplicities which lie at the foundation; and it is rather by simplicities than by mysteries that a Christian is to try himself and to see whether he be in the faith or no. Put the question, brethren, have we, then, this like precious faith in God and our Saviour Jesus Christ?

Our apostle has not finished the description, without saying that it is “*like* precious faith.” All faith is the same sort of faith. Our faith may not be like that of Peter, in degree, but if it be genuine, it is like it as to its nature, its origin, its objects, and its results. Here is a blessed equality. Speak of “liberty, equality, and fraternity,” you shall only find these things carried out within the Church of Christ. There is indeed a blessed equality here, for the poorest little-faith who ever crept into heaven on its hands and knees, has a *like* precious faith with the mighty apostle Peter. I say, brethren, if the one be gold, so is the other; if the one can move mountains, so can the other; for remember,

that the privileges of mountain-moving, and of plucking up the trees, and casting them into the sea, are not given to great faith, but “if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed,” it shall be done. Little faith has a royal descent and is as truly of divine birth as is the greatest and fullest assurance which ever made glad the heart of man, hence it ensures the same inheritance at the last, and the same safety by the way. It is “like precious faith.”

He tells us too, that faith is “*precious*,” and is it not precious? for it deals with precious things, with precious promises, with precious blood, with a precious redemption, with all the preciousness of the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Well may that be a precious faith which supplies our greatest want, delivers us from our greatest danger, and admits us to the greatest glory. Well may that be called “precious faith,” which is the symbol of our election, the evidence of our calling, the root of all our graces, the channel of communion, the weapon of prevalence, the shield of safety, the substance of hope, the evidence of eternity, the guerdon of immortality, and the passport of glory. O for more of this inestimably precious faith. Precious faith, indeed it is.

When the apostle, Simon Peter, writes “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” does he write to *you*? does he write to me? If not, if we are not here addressed, remember that we can never expect to hear the voice which says, “Come ye blessed of my Father;” but we are today in such a condition, that dying as we now are, “Depart ye cursed” must be the thunder which shall roll in our ears, and drive us down to hell. So much, then, concerning faith.

Now we shall turn to notice with great brevity, the LIFE. “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” Here we have, then, brethren, the *fountain and source* of our spiritual life. Just as faith is a boon which is to be obtained, so you will perceive that our spiritual life is a principle which is *given*. A thing which is given to us, too, by divine power—“according as his *divine power* hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” To give life at all is the essential attribute of God. This is an attribute which he will not alienate; to save and to destroy belong unto the Sovereign of heaven. “He can create, and he destroy,” is one of the profoundest notes in the ascription of our praise. Suppose a corpse before us. How great a pretender would he be who should boast that it was in his power to restore it to life. Certainly, it would be even a greater pretence if anyone should say that he could give to himself or to another the divine life, the spiritual life by which a man is made a Christian. My brethren, you who are partakers of the divine nature, know that by nature you were dead in trespasses and sins, and would have continued so until this day if there had not been an interposition of divine energy on your behalf. There you lay in the grave of your sin, rotten, corrupt. The voice of the minister called to you, but you did not hear. You were often bidden to come forth, but ye did not and could not come. But when the Lord said, “Lazarus, come forth,” then Lazarus came forth; and when he said to you, “Live,” then you lived also, and the spiritual life beat within you, with joy and peace through believing. This we ought never to forget, because, let us never fail to remember, that if our religion is a thing which sprang from ourselves, it is of the flesh, and must die. That which is born of the flesh in its best and most favourable moments, is flesh, and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. “Ye must be born again.” If a man’s religious life be only a refinement of his ordinary life, if it be only a high attainment of the natural existence, then is it not the spiritual life, and does not prepare him for the eternal life before the throne of God. No, we must have a supernatural spark of heavenly flame

kindled within us. Just as nothing but the soul can quicken the body and make it live, so the Spirit alone can quicken the soul and make the soul live. We must have the third master-principle infused, or else we shall be but natural men, made after the image of the first Adam. We must have, I say, the new spirit, or else we shall not be like the second Adam, who was made a quickening spirit. Only of the Christian can we say that he is spirit, soul, and body; the ungodly man has only soul and body, and as to spiritual existence, he is as dead as the body would be if there were no soul. Now the implantation of this new principle, called the spirit, is a work of divine power. *Divine power!* What stupendous issues are grasped in that term, divine power! It was this which digged the deep foundations of the earth and sea! Divine power, it is this which guides the marches of the stars of heaven! Divine power! it is this which holds up the pillars of the universe, and which one day shall shake them, and hurry all things back to their native nothingness. Yet the selfsame power which is required to create a world and to sustain it, is required to make man a Christian, and unless that power be put forth, the spiritual life is not in any one of us.

You will perceive, dear friends, that the apostle Peter wished to see this divine life in a healthy and vigorous state, and therefore he prays that *grace and peace may be multiplied*. Divine power is the foundation of this life; grace is the food it feeds upon, and peace is the element in which it lives most healthily. Give a Christian much grace, and his spiritual life will be like the life of a man who is well clothed and nurtured; keep the spiritual life without abundant grace, and it becomes lean, faint, and ready to die; and though die it cannot, yet will it seem as though it gave up the ghost, unless fresh grace be bestowed. Peace, I say, is the element in which it flourishes most. Let a Christian be much disturbed in mind, let earthly cares get into his soul, let him have doubts and fears as to his eternal safety, let him lose a sense of reconciliation to God, let his adoption be but dimly before his eyes, and you will not see much of the divine life within him. But oh! if God shall smile upon the life within you, and you get much grace from God, and your soul dwells much in the balmy air of heavenly peace, then shall you be strong to exercise yourself unto godliness, and your whole life shall adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour.

Observe, again, that in describing this life, he speaks of it as one which was conferred upon us by our being *called*. He says, "We were called unto glory and virtue." I find translators differ here. Many of them think the word should be "By"—"We are called by the glory and virtue of God"—that is, there is a manifestation of all the glorious attributes of God, and of all the efficacious virtue and energy of his power in the calling of every Christian. Simon Peter himself was at his fishing and in his boat, but Jesus said to him, "Follow me;" and at once he followed Christ. He says there was in that calling, the divine glory and virtue; and, doubtless, when you and I shall get to heaven, and see things as they are, we shall discover in our effectual calling of God to grace, a glory as great as in the creation of worlds, and a virtue as great as in the healing of the sick, when virtue went from the garments of a Saviour. Now, can we say today, that we have a life within us which is the result of divine power, and have we, upon searching ourselves, reason to believe, dear friends, that there is that within us which distinguishes us from other men, because we have been called out by mankind by the glory and energy of the divine power? I am afraid some of us must say "Nay." Then the Lord in his mercy yet bring us into the number of his people. But if we can, however, tremblingly say, "Yes, I trust there is something of the life in me;" then as Peter did so, do I wish for you that benediction, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." O brethren, whatever men may say against the faith of God, there is nothing in the world which creates virtue like true faith. Wherever true faith enters, though it be

into the heart of a harlot or of a thief, what a change it makes! See her there; she has polluted herself many times; she has gone far into sin. Mary has been a sinner; she hears the preaching of the Saviour; standing in the crowd she listens to him one day as he preaches concerning the prodigal, and how the loving father pressed him to his bosom; she comes to Jesus and she finds forgiveness. Is she a harlot any longer? Nay, there she is, washing his feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. The woman who was a sinner, hates her evil ways and loves her gracious Lord. We may say of her, "But she is washed, but she is sanctified, but she is saved." Take Saul of Tarsus. Foaming with blood, breathing out threatenings, he is going to Damascus to drag the saints of God to prison. On the road he is struck down; by divine mercy he is led to put his trust in Jesus. Is he a persecutor any longer? See that earnest apostle beaten with rods—shipwrecked—in labours more abundant than all the rest of them—counting not his life dear unto him, that he may win Christ and be found in him. Saul of Tarsus becomes a majestic proof of what the grace of God can do. See Zaccheus, the grasping publican, distributing his wealth, the Ephesians burning their magical books, the jailer washing the apostle's stripes. Take the case of many now present. Let memory refresh itself this morning, with the recollection of the change which has been wrought in you. We have nothing to boast of; God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ, but yet some of us are wonderful instances of renewing grace. We were unclean, our mouths could utter blasphemy; our temper was hot and terrible; our hands were unrighteous; we were altogether as an unclean thing, but how changed now! Again, I say, we boast of nothing which we now are, for by the grace of God we are what we are, yet the change is something to be wondered at. Has divine grace wrought this change in you? Be not weary with my reiteration of this question. Let me put it again to you till I get an answer; nay, till I force you to an answer: Have you this precious faith? Can you not answer the question? Then, have you not that divine life, that life which is given by divine calling? If you have the one, you have the other; and if you have not both, you have neither; for where there is the one, the other must come, and where the one has come, the other has been there.

II. I have thus fully but feebly brought the subject before you, allow me to remind you that another verse remains which handles the same topics. In the fourth verse, he deals with the privileges of faith, and also with the privileges of the spiritual life.

Notice the **PRIVILEGE OF FAITH** first. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises"—here is the faith, "That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Here is the life resulting from the faith. Now, the *privileges of faith* first. The privileges of faith are, that we have given to us "Exceeding great and precious promises." "Great and precious"—two words which do not often come together. Many things are great which are not precious, such as great rocks, which are of little value; on the other hand, many things are precious which are not great—such as diamonds and other jewels, which cannot be very great if they be very precious. But here we have promises which are so great, that they are not less than infinite, and so precious, that they are not less than divine. I shall not attempt to speak about their greatness or their preciousness, but just give a catalogue of them, and leave you to guess at both. We have some of them which are like birds in the hands—we have them already; other promises are like birds in the bush, only that they are just as valuable and as sure as those which are in the hand.

Note here, then, we have received by precious faith the promise and *pardon*. Hark thee, my soul, all thy sins are forgiven thee. He who hath faith in Christ hath no sin to curse him, his sins

are washed away, they have ceased to be; they have been carried on the scape-goat's head into the wilderness; they are drowned in the Red Sea; they are blotted out; they are thrown behind God's back; they are cast into the depths of the sea. Here is a promise of perfect pardon. Is not this great and precious?—as great as your sins are; and if your sins demanded a costly ransom, this precious promise is as great as the demand.

Then comes the *righteousness* of Christ: you are not only pardoned, that is, washed and made clean, but you are dressed, robed in garments such as no man could ever weave. The vesture is divine. Jehovah himself has wrought out your righteousness for you; the holy life of Jesus the Son of God, has become your beautiful dress, and you are covered with it. Christian, is not this an exceeding great and precious promise? The law was great—this righteousness is as great as the law. The law asked a precious revenue from man, more than humanity could pay—the righteousness of Christ has paid it all. Is it not great and precious?

Then next comes *reconciliation*. You were strangers, but you are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Once aliens, but now fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. Is not this great and precious?

Then comes your *adoption*. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” “And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be we suffer with him that we may be glorified together.” Oh, how glorious is this great and precious promise of adoption!

Then we have the promise of *providence*: “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose.” “Thy place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks.” “Thy bread shall be given thee and thy waters shall be sure.” “As thy days thy strength shall be.” “Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God.” “When thou passest through the rivers, I will be with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee. When thou goest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.” When I think of providence, the greatness of its daily gifts, and the preciousness of its hourly boons, I may well say, here is an exceeding great and precious promise.

Then you have the promise too, that you shall never taste of death but shall only sleep in Jesus. “Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they cease from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Nor does the promise cease here, you have the promise of *a resurrection*. “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Beloved, we know that if Christ rose from the dead, so also them who sleep in Jesus, will the Lord bring with him. Nor is this all, for we shall *reign with Jesus*; at his coming, we shall be glorified with him, we shall sit upon his throne, even as he has overcome and sits with his Father upon his throne. The harps of heaven, the streets of glory, the trees of paradise, the river of the water of life, the eternity of immaculate bliss—all these, God hath promised to them who love him. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;” and by our faith we have grasped them, and we have today “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” Now, beloved, see how rich faith makes you!—what treasure!—what a costly regalia!—what gold mines!—what oceans of wealth!—what mountains of sparkling treasures has God conferred upon you by faith!

But we must not forget the *life*, and with that we close. The text says, he has given us this promise, “*that*”—“in order that.” What then? What are all these treasures lavished for? For what these pearls? For what these jewels? For what, I say, these oceans of treasure? For what? Is the end worthy of the means? Surely God never giveth greater store than the thing which he would purchase will be worth. We may suppose, then, the end to be very great when such costly means have been given; and what is the end? Why, “that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” O, my brethren, if you have these mercies today by faith, do see to it that the result is obtained. Be not content to be made rich in these great and precious promises, without answering God’s design in your being thus enriched. That design, you perceive, is twofold; it is first that you may be partakers of the divine nature; and, secondly, that you may escape the corruption which is in the world.

To be a partaker of the divine nature is not, of course, to become God. That cannot be. The essence of Deity is not to be participated in by the creature. Between the creature and the Creator there must ever be a gulf fixed in respect of essence; but as the first man Adam was made in the image of God, so we, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, are in a yet diviner sense made in the image of the Most High, and are partakers of the divine nature. We are, by grace, made like God. “God is love;” we become love—“He that loveth is born of God.” God is truth; we become true, and we love that which is true, and we hate the darkness and the lie. God is good, it is his very name; he makes us good by his grace, so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God. Nay, I will say this, that we become partakers of the divine nature in even a higher sense than this—in fact, in any sense, anything short of our being absolutely divine. Do we not become members of the body of the divine person of Christ? And what sort of union is this—“members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones?” The same blood which flows in the head flows in the hand, and the same life which quickens Christ, quickens his people; for, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Nay, as if this were not enough, we are married into Christ. He hath betrothed us unto himself in righteousness and in faithfulness; and as the spouse must, in the nature of things, be a partaker of the same nature as the husband, so Jesus Christ first became partaker of flesh and blood that they twain might be one flesh; and then he makes his Church partakers of the same spirit, that they twain may be one spirit; for he who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Oh, marvellous mystery! we look into it, but who shall understand it? One with Jesus, by eternal union one, married to him; so one with him that the branch is not more one with the vine than we are a part of the Lord, our Saviour, and our Redeemer. Rejoice in this, brethren, ye are made partakers of the divine nature, and all these promises are given to you in order that you may show this forth among the sons of men, that ye are like God, and not like ordinary men; that ye are different now from what flesh and blood would make you, having been made participators of the nature of God.

Then the other result which follows from it, was this, “Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Ah, beloved, it were ill that a man who is alive should dwell in corruption. “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell among the dead? Should divine life be found amongst the corruptions of worldly lusts? The bride of Christ drunken! Frequenting the ale-house! A member of Christ’s body found intoxicated in the streets, or lying, or blaspheming, or dishonest! God forbid. Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them members of a harlot? How can I drink the cup of the Lord, and drink the cup of Belial? How can it be possible that I can have life, and yet dwell in the black, dark, foul, filthy, pestiferous tomb of the world’s lusts? Surely, brethren, from these open lusts and sins ye have escaped: have

ye also escaped from slothfulness? Have ye clean escaped from carnal security? Are we seeking day by day to live above worldliness, and love of the things of the world, and the ensnaring avarice which they nourish? Remember, it is for this that you have been enriched with the treasures of God. Do not, oh, I conjure you, do not, chosen of God and beloved by him, and so graciously enriched, do not suffer all this lavish treasure to be wasted upon you.

There is nothing which my heart desires more than to see you, the members of this Church, distinguished for holiness: it is the Christian's crown and glory. An unholy Church! it is of no use to the world, and of no esteem among men. Oh! it is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. And the larger the Church, the more influential, the worse nuisance does it become, when it becomes dead and unholy. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world, have been brought upon her by an unholy Church. Whence came the darkness of the dark ages? From the Church of Rome. And if we want to see the world again sitting in Egyptian darkness, bound with fetters of iron, we have only to give up the faith, and to renounce holiness of life, and we may drag the world down again to the limbo of superstition, and bind her fast in chains of ignorance and vice. O Christian, the vows of God are upon you. You are God's priest: act as such. You are God's king: reign over your lusts. You are God's chosen: do not associate with Belial. Heaven is your portion; live like a heavenly spirit, so shall you prove that you have the true faith; but except ye do this, your end shall be to lift up your eyes in hell, and find yourself mistaken when it will be too late to seek or find a remedy. The Lord give us the faith and the life, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Do You Know Him?

A Sermon

(No. 552)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, January 31st, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“That I may know him.”—Philippians 3:10.

THE object of the apostle's life—that for which he sacrificed everything: country, kindred, honor, comfort, liberty, and life itself, was, that he might know Christ. Observe that this is not Paul's prayer as an unconverted man, that he may know Christ, and so be saved; for it follows upon the previous supplication that he might win Christ and be found in him. This is the desire of one who has been saved, who enjoys the full conviction that his sins are pardoned, and that he is in Christ. It is only the regenerated and saved man who can feel the desire, “That I may know him.” Are you astonished that a saved man should have such a desire as this? A moment's reflection will remove your astonishment. Imagine for a moment that you are living in the age of the Roman emperors. You have been captured by Roman soldiers and dragged from your native country; you have been sold for a slave, stripped, whipped, branded, imprisoned, and treated with shameful cruelty. At last you are appointed to die in the amphitheatre, to make holiday for a tyrant. The populace assemble with delight. There they are, tens of thousands of them, gazing down from the living sides of the capacious Colosseum. You stand alone, and naked, armed only with a single dagger—a poor defense against gigantic beasts. A ponderous door is drawn up by machinery, and forth there rushes the monarch of the forest—a huge lion; you must slay him or be torn to pieces. You are absolutely certain that the conflict is too stern for you, and that the sure result must and will be that those terrible teeth will grind your bones and drip with your blood. You tremble; your joints are loosed; you are paralyzed with fear, like the timid deer when the lion has dashed it to the ground. But what is this? O wonder of mercy!—a deliverer appears. A great unknown leaps from among the gazing multitude, and confronts the savage monster. He quails not at the roaring of the devourer, but dashes upon him with terrible fury, till, like a whipped cur, the lion slinks towards his den, dragging himself along in pain and fear. The hero lifts you up, smiles into your bloodless face, whispers comfort in your ear, and bids you be of good courage, for you are free. Do you not think that there would arise at once in your heart a desire to know your deliverer? As the guards conducted you into the open street, and you breathed the cool, fresh air, would not the first question be, “Who was my deliverer, that I may fall at his feet and bless him?” You are not, however, informed, but instead of it you are gently led away to a noble mansion house, where your many wounds are washed and healed with salve of rarest power. You are clothed in sumptuous apparel; you are made to sit down at a feast; you eat and are satisfied; you rest upon the softest down. The next morning you are attended by servants who guard you from evil and minister to your good. Day after day, week after week, your wants are supplied. You live like a courtier. There is nothing that you can ask which you do not receive. I am sure that your curiosity would grow more and more intense till it would ripen into an insatiable craving. You would scarcely neglect an opportunity of asking the servants, “Tell me, who does all this, who is my noble benefactor, for *I must know him?*”

“Well, but” they would say, “is it not enough for you that you are delivered from the lion?” “Nay,” say you, “it is for that very reason that I pant to know *him*.” “Your wants are richly supplied—why are you vexed by curiosity as to the hand which reaches you the boon? If your garment is worn out, there is another. Long before hunger oppresses you, the table is well loaded. What more do you want?” But your reply is, “It is because I have no wants, that, therefore, my soul longs and yearns even to hungering and to thirsting, that I may know my generous loving friend.” Suppose that as you wake up one morning, you find lying up on your pillow a precious love-token from your unknown friend, a ring sparkling with jewels and engraved with a tender inscription, a bouquet of flowers bound about with a love-motto! Your curiosity now knows no bounds. But you are informed that this wondrous being has not only done for you what you have seen, but a thousand deeds of love which you did not see, which were higher and greater still as proofs of his affection. You are told that he was wounded, and imprisoned, and scourged for your sake, for he had a love to you so great, that death itself could not overcome it: you are informed that he is every moment occupied in your interests, because he has sworn by himself that where he is there you shall be; his honors you shall share, and of his happiness you shall be the crown. Why, methinks you would say, “Tell me, men and women, any of you who know him, tell me who he is and what he is;” and if they said, “But it is enough for you to know that he loves you, and to have daily proofs of his goodness,” you would say, “No, these love-tokens increase my thirst. If ye see him, tell him I am sick of love. The flagons which he sends me, and the love-tokens which he gives me, they stay me for awhile with the assurance of his affection but they only impel me onward with the more unconquerable desire that I may know him. I must know him; I cannot live without knowing him. His goodness makes me thirst, and pant, and faint, and even die, that I may know him.”

Have I imagined emotions which would not be natural? I think not. The most cool and calculating would be warmed with desires like these. Methinks what I have now pictured before you will wake the echoes in your breasts, and you will say, “Ah, it is even so! It is because Christ loved me and gave himself for me that I want to know him; it is because he has shed his blood for me and has chosen me that I may be one with him for ever, that my soul desires a fuller acquaintance with him.”

Now may God, the Holy Ghost, very graciously lead me onward that I may also quicken in you the desire to know HIM.

I. Beloved, let us PASS BY THAT CROWD OF OUTER-COURT WORSHIPPERS WHO ARE CONTENT TO LIVE WITHOUT KNOWING CHRIST. I do not mean the ungodly and profane; we will not consider them just now—they are altogether strangers and foreigners to him—I mean children of God: the visible saints. How many there are of these whom I must call outer-court worshippers, for they are strangers to this panting to know him. They can say with Paul, “That I may *win* him and *be found in* him”—that they do want; but this higher wish, “That I may *know* him,” has not stirred their hearts. How many brethren we know, who are content to know *Christ’s historic life!* They read the evangelists and they are charmed with the perfect beauty of the Savior’s history. “Never man spake like this man,” say they; and they confess that never man acted with such love as he did. They know all the incidents of his life, from his manger to his cross; but they do not know HIM. They are as men who have read “Caesar’s Commentaries,” but who have never seen Caesar. They know the battles which Caesar fought; they can even recognize the mantle which Caesar wore “that day he overcame the Nervii;” but they do not know Caesar himself. The person of the Lord Jesus is as much hidden from their eyes as the golden pot of manna when concealed

in the ark. They know the life of Christ, hut not Christ the Life; they admire his way among men, hut they see not himself as the way.

Others there are who know *Christ's doctrine*, and prize it too, but they know not Him. All which he taught is dear to them; orthodoxy—for this they would burn at Smithfield, or lay down their necks at Tower Hill. Many of them are well-instructed and divinely-illuminated in the doctrine of Christ, and the wonder is, that they should stop there; because, beloved, it does seem to me when I begin to know a man's teaching, that the next thing is the desire to know his person. Addison, in one of the "Spectators," tells us that the reason why so many books are printed with the portraits of the authors is just this, that as a man reads a book, lie feels a desire to know what sort of appearance the author had. This, indeed, is very natural. If you have ever been refreshed under a minister's printed sermons, if you have at any time received any benefit from his words, I know you have said, "I would like to see that man; I would like to hear the truth flow hot and fresh from his living lips; I would like to know just how he said that sentence, and how that passage sounded as it came from his earnest heart." My beloved, surely if you know the doctrine of Jesus, if you have so been with Christ as to sit at his feet and hear what he has to say, you must, I hope, have had some longings to know him—to know his person; and if you have, you will have had to pass by multitudes of followers of Jesus who rest satisfied with his words, but forget that he is himself "THE WORD."

Beloved, there are others—and against them I bring no complaint; they go as far as they can—who are delighted with Christ's example. Christ's character is in their esteem the mirror of all perfection. They desire to walk in his footsteps; they listen to his sermon upon the Mount; they are enchanted with it—as well they may be; they pray to be obedient in all things to Christ, as their Master and their Lord. They do well. Mark, I am finding no fault with any of these who prize the history, or who value the doctrine, or who admire the precept; but I want more. I do want, beloved, that you and I should "know HIM." I love his precepts, but I love HIM better. Sweet is the water from Bethlehem's well; and well worth the struggle of the armed men to win but a bucket from it; but the well itself is better, and deserves all Israel's valor to defend it. As the source is ever more valuable than the stream, so is Christ ever better than the best words of his lips, or the best deeds of his hand. I want to *know him*. I do care for his actions; my soul would sit down and admire those masterly works of holy art—his miracles of humiliation, of suffering, of patience, and of holy charity; but better far I love the hands which wrought these master-works, the lips which spoke these goodly words, and the heart which heaved with that matchless love which was the cause of all. Yes, beloved, we must get farther than Immanuel's achievements, however glorious; we must come to "know him."

Most believers rest perfectly at ease with knowing *Christ's sacrifice*. They see Jesus as the great High Priest, laying a great sacrifice upon the altar for their sins, and with their whole heart they accept his atonement. By faith they know that all their sin is taken away by precious blood. This is a most blessed and hallowed attainment, I will grant you; but it is not every Christian who perceives that Christ was not only the offerer of a sacrifice, but was *himself* the sacrifice, and, therefore, loves him as such. Priest, altar, victim, everything Christ was. He gathers up all in himself, and when I see that he loved me, and gave *himself* for me, it is not enough to know this fact: I want to know *him*, the glorious person who does and is all this. I want to know the man who thus gave himself for me. I want to behold the Lamb once slain for me. I want to rest upon the bosom which covers the heart which was pierced with the spear; I pray him to kiss me with the kisses of that

mouth which cried, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" I love Calvary, the scene of woe, but I love Christ better, the great object of that agony; and even his cross and all his sufferings, dear though these must ever be to the Christian mind, only occupying a second place; the first seat is for himself, his person, his deity, and humanity.

Thus, you see, we have to leave a great many believers behind; nor have we enumerated all, for I believe that even some of those saints who have received grace to look for the coming of Christ, yet in their vision of his coming too much forget him. Is it not possible for nine to pant for the second advent as to lose sight of *him* who is to make that advent? So to long for a millennium, that I may forget him who is to reign King of kings? So to pant after that glory of Israel that I may forget him who is Israel's glory? Anywhere short of *knowing him*, I would not have you stop, beloved; and even when you know him, I would urge you still to be impelled with the same desire, and to press forward, crying with the apostle, "That I may know him."

Beloved, how many there are who have heard of Christ and read about Christ, and that is enough for them! But it is not enough for me, and it should not be enough for you. The apostle Paul did not say "I have *heard* of him, on whom I have believed," but "I *know* whom I have believed." To hear about Christ may damn you, it may be a savor of death unto death to you. You have heard of him with the ear; but it is essential that you know him in order that you may be partakers of eternal life. My dear hearers, be not content unless you have this as your soul's present portion.

Others there be who have been persuaded by the judgment and encouragement of others, that they know something about the great Redeemer. They do *not* know him, but still they are persuaded by others that they have an interest in him. Let me warn you of second-hand spirituality, it is a rotten, soul-deceiving deception. Beware of all esteeming yourself according to the thoughts of others, or you will be ruined. Another man's opinion of me may have great influence over me, I have heard of a man in perfectly good health killed by the opinion of others. Several of his friends had foolishly agreed to play him a practical trick; whereupon one of them met him and said, "How ill you look this morning." He did not feel so; he was very much surprised at the remark. When he met the next, who said to him, "Oh! dear, how bad you look," he began to think there might be something in it; and as he turned smart round the corner, a third person said to him, "What a sight you are! How altered from what you used to be!" He went home ill, he took to his bed and died. So goes the story, and I should not marvel if it really did occur. Now, if such might be the effect of persuasion and supposed belief in the sickness of a man, how much more readily may men be persuaded into the idea of spiritual health! A believer meets you, and by his treatment seems to say, "I welcome you as a dear brother"—and means it too. You are baptized, and you are received into Church-fellowship, and so everybody thinks that you must be a follower of Christ; and yet you may not *know him*. Oh, I do pray you, do not be satisfied with being persuaded into something like an assurance that you are in him, but *do know him—know him for yourself*.

There are many who I hope will be saved ere long; but I am in great doubt of them, because they can only say they half think they know Christ; they do not quite believe in him, but they do not disbelieve in him; they halt between two opinions. Ah, dear hearer, that is a very dangerous place to stand in. The border-land is the devil's hunting ground. Undecided souls are fair game for the great fowler. God give you once for all the true decision by which through grace you shall *know him*. Do not be satisfied with thinking you know him; hoping you know him, but *know him*. Oh, it is nothing to have heard about him, to have talked about him, to have eaten and have drunk with him, to have preached him, or even to have wrought miracles in his name, to have been charmed

by his eloquence, to have been stirred with the story of his love, to have been moved to imitate him—this shall nothing avail you, unless you win him and are found in him. Seek with the apostle, to give up everything of your own righteousness, and all other objects and aims in life, and say, “This I seek after, that I may know him.” Thus much, then, on the first point. Leaving those behind who do not know him, let us make an advance.

II. Secondly, let us DRAW CURTAIN AFTER CURTAIN WHICH SHALL ADMIT US TO KNOW MORE OF CHRIST.

Did you ever visit the manufactory of splendid porcelain at Sevres? I have done so. If anybody should say to me, “Do you know the manufactory at Sevres?” I should say, “Yes, I do, and no, I do not. I know it, for I have seen the building; I have seen the rooms in which the articles are exhibited for sale, and I have seen the museum and model room; but I do not know the factory as I would like to know it, for I have not seen the process of manufacture, and have not been admitted into the workshops, as some are. “Suppose I had seen, however, the process of the moulding of the clay, and the laying on of the rich designs, if anybody should still say to me, “Do you know how they manufacture those wonderful articles?” I should very likely still be compelled to say, “No, I do not, because there are certain secrets, certain private rooms into which neither friend nor foe can be admitted, lest the process should be open to the world.” So, you see, I might say I knew, and yet might not half know; and when I half knew, still there would be so much left, that I might be compelled to say, “I do not know.” How many different ways there are of knowing a person—and even so there are all these different ways of knowing Christ; so that you may keep on all your lifetime, still wishing to get into another room, and another room, nearer and nearer to the great secret, still panting to “know him.” Good Rutherford says, “I urge upon you a nearer communion with Christ, and a growing communion. There are curtains to be drawn by, in Christ, that we never shut, and new foldings in love with him. I despair that ever I shall win to the far end of that love; there are so many plies in it. Therefore, dig deep, and set by as much time in the day for him as you can, he will be won by labor.”

To begin with. We know a person *when we recognize him*. You know the Queen. Well, I do. I recollect seeing her, and if I were to see any quantity of ladies, I think I should know which was the Queen and which was not. You may say honestly that you know her to that extent. Beloved, every Christian must in this sense know Christ. You must know him by a divine illumination so as to know who he is and what line is. When Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Whom sayest thou that I am,” he said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;” and the Lord replied, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee.” It is an early step in this knowledge of Christ, to know and to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord; to know that Christ is God, divine to me; that Christ is man, brother to me—bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh—that as such line is a sin-subduing Savior; that line is for inc an intercessor, pleading before the throne; my prophet, priest, and king—in this sense I trust that most of you know him. If you do not, breathe the silent prayer now, “Lord, help me that I may know him.” But this knowledge of recognition is comparatively a low attainment, one of the lowest rounds of the ladder of light.

In the second place, a believer knows Christ, to a higher degree when he knows him by *practical experiment at acquaintance with what he does*. For instance, I know Christ as a cleanser. They tell me he is a refiner, that he cleanses from spots; he has washed me in his precious blood, and to that extent I know him. They tell me that he clothes the naked; he hath covered me with a garment of righteousness, and to that extent I know him. They tell me that he is a breaker, and that he breaks

fetters, he has set my soul at liberty, and therefore I know him. They tell me that he is a king and that he reigns over sin; he hath subdued my enemies beneath his feet, and I know him in that character. They tell me he is a shepherd: I know him for I am his sheep. They say he is a door: I have entered in through him, and I know him as a door. They say he is food: my spirit feeds on him as on the bread of heaven, and, therefore, I know him as such. You know if anyone says, "Do you know doctor So-and-so?" It is a very satisfactory answer, if you can reply, "Oh, yes, I know him, for he attended me the last time that I was ill." There is more knowledge in that, than if one could only say, "Oh, yes, I know him: he wears such-and-such a hat or 'line is a man of such-and-such an appearance.'" So, Christian, thing is a second and higher step to know Christ, because you have experienced in your own soul that he is just what God has revealed him to be.

But we know a man in a better sense than this when we are *on speaking terms with him*. "Do you know So-and-so?" "Yes," you say, I not only know him by name, so as to recognize him; I not only know him as a tradesman having dealt with him, but I know him because when we pass each other in the morning, we exchange a word or two; and if I had anything to say upon matters—any request to make—I should feel no difficulty about asking him." Well, now, the Christian knows his Lord in this sense, line has every day official communication with Christ, line is on speaking terms with him. There may be persons here, perhaps, who know the Queen in a sense in which I do not know her—perhaps they speak to him. They have so done; I have never done that; they go beyond me there. But you see, dear friends, this is not a very great thing because you may be on speaking terms with a man, but you may not know much of him for all that. So you may be in the habit of daily prayer, and you may talk with Christ every morning and every evening, and you may know exceedingly little of him. You are on speaking terms with him; but there ins something beyond this, very far beyond this. As I might say that I know a man merely because I meet him every day, and ask him for what I want, and understand that he is kind and generous; but how shallow is such an acquaintance, for I do not know his private character nor his inward heart. Even so a believer may have constant dealings with Christ in his prayers and in his praises, and yet for all that, he may have only gone a certain distance, and may have need still to pray, "That I may know him."

But you are said to know a person better still *when he invites you to his house*. At Christmas time there is a family party and a romp, and he asks you there, and you are one of the children, and enter into all their sports around the fire-side, and you indulge as they do in the genialities of social life. You are asked again; you go there pretty often; in fact, if there is a happy evening in that house they generally expect to see friend So-and-so there. Well, now, that is better. We are getting now into something like knowing a man; and I do trust there are many of you, beloved, who have got as far as this with regard to your divine Lord. Christ has entertained you with some rare visits from his gracious presence. He brought you into the banquetting-house, and his banner over you was love. When he manifested himself, he did it unto you as he did not unto the world. He was pleased in the majesty of his condescension, to take you aside and show you his hands and his side. He called you "Friend;" he treated you as such, and permitted you to enjoy thine sweets of being one of the family.

Ah, but you may go into a man's house as a constant visitor, and yet you may not know him—that is to say, not in the highest sense. You speak to the man's wife and say, "Your husband is a marvellously charming man; what a cheerful, joyful, spirited man he is; he never seems to have any depressions of spirit, and experiences no changes whatever." She shakes her head, and she

says, "Ah! you do not know him, you do not know him as I do;" because shine sees him at all times and at all hours; she can read the very heart of the man. That Christian has grown much in grace who has advanced not only to be the friend of Christ, having occasional fellowship with him, but who comes to recognize his marriage-union with the person of his Lord, and of whom it can be said, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant," Now we have the intimacy of love, with its perfect frankness, nearness, sweetness, joyousness, delight. The rending away of every separating veil makes the communion to be as near as it well can be this side the black river; but a Christian may get farther than this.

Even the spouse may not know her husband. The most loving wife who ever entered into the cares of her husband, must have discovered that there is a something which separates his experience from her powers of comprehension. Luther's wife, Catherine, was of all women the wife for Luther; but there were times in Luther's gigantic tribulations, when he must leave Kate behind. There were extraordinary times within him; times both of ecstatic joy, when like a great angel, he stretched his mighty wings, and flew right up to heaven, and of awful misery, when he seemed to sink down to the very depths of hell; and in either case, no other heart could keep pace with him. Then it was himself alone who had communion with himself. And a Christian may so grow in grace as to become identified with Christ, a member of his body; not so much married to him as a part of him, a member of the great body of Christ, so that he suffers with Christ, sympathizes with Jesus, his heart beating to the same dolorous tune, his veins swollen with the sumac floods of grief, or else his eyes sparkling with that same gleam of joy, according to the Master's Word, "That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Well, have not you waded out of your depth some of you? I have certainly got out of my own. I feel as if the Master might come on to this platform, look round on many of us, and say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" for truly even in the minor sense, though I trust we are saved, though we have believed in Jesus, yet we have not reached the height of this great text—"That I may know him."

III. Having taken you so far, let us SIT DOWN A FEW MINUTES AND CONSIDER WHAT SORT OF KNOWLEDGE THIS KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST IS—"That I may know him."

Then it is clear, if I know him I shall have a very vivid sense of *his personality*. "That I may know him." He will not be to me a myth, a vision, a spirit, but a person, a real solid person, as much real as I am myself, or as my dearest friend can be to me. My soul, never be satisfied within a shadowy Christ. My heart, be thou never content until he hath embraced thy soul, and proved to thee that *he is* the lover of his people. This knowledge, then, must be a knowledge of him in his personality. Then, beloved, it must be a *personal* knowledge on our part. I cannot know Christ through another person's brains. I cannot love him with another man's heart, and I cannot see him with another man's eyes. Heaven's delight is, "*Mine* eyes shall see him and not another." *These* eyes shall behold the King in his beauty. Well, beloved, if this be heaven, we certainly cannot do without a personal sight of Christ here. I am so afraid of living in a second-hand religion. God forbid that I should get a biographical experience. Lord save us from having borrowed communion. No, *I* must know him *myself*. O God, let me not be deceived in this. *I* must know *him* without fancy or proxy; I must know him on mine own account.

Then these few thoughts upon what sort of knowledge we must have. It must be an intelligent knowledge—I must know *him*. I must know his natures, divine and human. I must know his offices—I must know his attributes—I must know his works—I must know his shame—I must

know his glory; for I do not know him if it be merely a subject of passion and not of intellect. I must let my head consciously meditate upon him until I own something like an idea of him, that I may “Comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”

Then I must have an *affectionate* knowledge of him; and, indeed, if I do know him at all, I must love him. As it is said of some men, that there is such a charm about them, that if you once get into their company you cannot criticise any longer, but must admire; so you feel with Christ. It is said of Garibaldi, that if you are in his society he charms all, so that even malice and slander must be silent in his presence. Infinitely, supremely so is it with Christ. Being near him, his love warms our hearts, till we glow with intense love to him.

Then I shall find, if I know Christ, that this is a *satisfying* knowledge. When I know Christ my mind will be filled to the brim—I shall feel that I have found that which my spirit panted after. “This is that bread whereof if a man eat he shall never hunger.”

At the same time it is an *exciting* knowledge; the more I know of Christ, the more I shall want to know. The deeper I plunge the greater the depths which will be revealed. The higher I climb the loftier will be the summits which invite my eager footsteps. I shall want the more as I get the more. My spiritual thirst will increase, though in another sense it will be entirely quenched.

And this knowledge of Christ will be a most *happy* one, in fact, so happy, that sometimes it will completely bear me up above all trials, and doubts, and sorrows; and it will, while I enjoy it, make me something more than “Man that is born of a woman who is of few days, and full of trouble;” for it will fling about me the immortality of the ever-living Savior, and gird me with the golden girdle of his eternal happiness. To be near to Christ, is to be near to the pearly gates of the golden-streeted city. Say not, “Jerusalem, my happy home, my labors have an end in thee;” but say, “Jesus, thou art my rest, and when I have thee, my spirit is at peace.” I might thus keep on speaking in praise of this knowledge, but I will not.

Only permit me to say, what a *refreshing*, what a *sanctifying* knowledge is this, to know *him*. When the Laodicean Church was neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, how did Christ seek her revival? Did he send her precious doctrines? Did he send her excellent precepts? Mark you, he came himself, for thus it is said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” That is a cure for it all, you see. No matter how lukewarm, though God may say, “I will spue thee out of my mouth,” yet, if Christ comes, that is the cure. The presence of Christ with his Church puts away all her sicknesses. When the disciples of Christ were at sea in a storm, do you recollect how he comforted them? Did he send them an angel? No. “*It is I, line not afraid;*” and when they knew him, then they had no more fears. They were assembled one night, “the doors being shut for fear of the Jews:” how did he comfort them? Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said, “Peace be unto you.” There was Thomas, full of doubts and fears. How did Jesus Christ take away his doubts? “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.” Oh! it is Christ, it is Christ who cures all. The company of Christ is the only thing which a Christian wants. I will undertake that if his heart be like an iceberg, as soon as Jesus comes, it shall flame like Vesuvius. His spirit shall be dead and like a rotten corpse; but if Jesus comes he shall leap like a hart, and become strong as a young unicorn. Thy presence makes me like the chariots of Amminadib. Now, do not think I am talking what I do not know. Do not imagine that I am talking mere fanatical slip-slop which I cannot prove. I do assert (and God who searcheth all hearts, knows

how true this is), I do assert that, from the depths of doubt, of dullness, of worldliness, I have leaped in one moment into love, and life, and holy enthusiasm, when Jesus Christ has manifested himself to mine. I cannot describe the difference between my spirit, water-logged, worm-eaten, ready to sink to the bottom without Christ, and that same spirit, like a strong staunch ship, with sails full, with favorable wind, speeding into harbor, with a golden freight. Like you poor little bird which some cruel boy has torn from the nest and almost killed—it is not fledged yet, and cannot fly, and it lies down to die, trampled in the mire in the streets—that is my heart without Christ. But see that other bird! The cage-door is opened, its wings vibrate, it sings within all its might, and flies up to talk with the sun—that is my heart when I have the conscious presence of my Lord Jesus Christ! I only bring in my own consciousness because I do not know yours; but I think I will now venture to say that every believer here will admit it is the same with him—

“Midst darkest shades if he appear

My dawning is begun;

He is my soul's bright morning star,

And he my rising sun.

IV. I shall close by urging you, dearly beloved, who know the Lord, to take this desire of the apostle, and by exhorting you, make it your own, “That I may know him.” I wish I had time this morning—time will fly—I wish I had time to urge and press you, believers, onward to seek to know him. Paul, you see, gave up everything for this—you will be seeking what is worth having. There can be no mistake about this. If Paul will renounce all, there must be a reward which is worthy of the sacrifice. If you have any fears, if you seek Christ and find him, they will be removed. You complain that you do not feel the guilt of sin; that you cannot humble yourself enough. The sight of Christ is the very best means of setting sin in its true colors. There is no repenting like that which comes from a look of Christ's eye: the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly. So it is not a sight of the law, it is the sight of Christ looking upon us which will break our hearts.

There is nothing like this to fill you with courage. When Dr. Andrew Reed found some difficulties in the founding of one of his orphan asylums, he sat down and drew upon a little piece of paper the cross, and then he said to himself, “What, despair in the face of the cross?” and then he drew a ring round the cross, and wrote in it *nil desperandum!* and took it for his coat of arms. Oh, there cannot be any despair in the presence of the cross. Thou dying Lamb, didst thou endure the cross, despising the shame, and shall I talk of difficulties when thy glory is in the way? God forbid! O holy face, bedewed with bloody sweat, I pledge myself in thy solemn and awful presence, that though this face of mine should be bedewed with sweat of the like sort, to accomplish any labor upon which thou shalt put me; by thy will and in thy strength, I will not shrink from the task. A sight of Christ, brethren, will keep you from despondency, and doubts, and despair. A sight of Christ! How shall I stir you to it? It will fire you to duty; it will deliver you from temptation; it will, in fact, make you like him. A man is known by his company; and if you have become acquainted with Christ, and know him, you will be sure to reflect his light. It is because the moon hath converse within the sun, that she hath any light for this dark world's night; and if you talk with Christ, the Sun, he will shine on you so gloriously, that you, like the moon, shall reflect his light, and the dark night of this world shall be enlightened by your radiance. The Lord help us to know him.

But I do seem, this morning, to have been talking to you about him, and not to have brought him forward. O that I knew how to introduce you to him! You who do not love him, O that I could

make you seek after him! But you who do love him and have trusted in him, O that I could make you hunger and thirst until you were filled with him! There he is, nailed to his cross, suffering—oh! how much!—for you; there he is, risen, ascended, pleading before the throne of God for you. Here he is: “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Here he is, waiting to be comforted with your company, desiring communion with you, panting that his sister, his spouse, would be no longer a stranger to him. Here he is, waiting to be gracious, saying, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Come, Christian, come, let this be thy desire, “That I may know him.”

And you who do not know him, and have not loved him, I pray you, breathe this prayer with me, ” Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” O sinner, he is a gentle Christ; he is a loving Savior, and they that seek him early shall find him. May you seek and find him, for his name’s sake. Amen.

Election no Discouragement to Seeking Souls

A Sermon

(No. 553)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 7th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“I will be gracious upon whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy upon whom I will show mercy.”—Exodus 33:19.

BECAUSE GOD IS THE MAKER, and creator, and sustainer of all things, he has a right to do as he wills with all his works. “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” God’s absolute supremacy and unlimited sovereignty naturally flow from his omnipotence, and if it were not so, the superlative excellence of the divine character would entitle him to absolute dominion. He should be chief who is best. He who *cannot* err, being perfect in wisdom; he who *will* not err, being as perfect in holiness; he who can do no wrong, being supremely just; he who must act in accordance with the principles of kindness, seeing he is essentially love, is the most fitting person to rule. Tell me not of the creatures ruling themselves: what a chaos were this! Talk not of a supposed republic of all created existences, controlling and guiding themselves. All the creatures put together, with their combined wisdom and goodness—if, indeed, it were not combined folly and wickedness—all these, I say, with all the excellencies of knowledge, judgment, and love, which the most fervid imagination can suppose them to possess, could not make the equal of that great God whose name is holiness, whose essence is love, to whom all power belongeth, and to whom alone wisdom is to be ascribed. Let *him* reign supreme, for he is infinitely superior to all other existences. Even if he did not actually reign, the suffrages of all wise men would choose the Lord Jehovah to be absolute monarch of the universe; and if he were not already King of kings and Lord of lords, doing as he wills among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world, it were the path of wisdom to lift him up to that throne. Since men have sinned, there becomes a yet further reason, or, rather a wider scope for the display of sovereignty. The creature, as a creature, may be supposed to have some claim upon the Creator; at least, it may expect that he shall not make it intentionally and despotically to put it to pain; that he shall not arbitrarily and without cause or necessity, cause its existence to be one of misery. I will not venture to judge the Lord, but I do think it is altogether incompatible with his goodness that he should have made a creature, and, as a creature, have condemned it to misery. Justice seems to demand that there shall be no punishment where there is no sin. But man has lost all his rights as a creature. If he ever had any, he has sinned them away. Our first parents have sinned, and we, their children, have attained ourselves, by high treason against our liege lord and sovereign. All that a just God owes to any one of us on the footing of our own claim, is wrath and displeasure. If he should give to us our due, we should not longer remain on praying ground, breathing the air of mercy. The creature, before its Creator, must now be silent as to any demands upon him; it cannot require anything of him as a matter of right. If the Lord willeth to show mercy, it shall be so; but, if he withholds it, who can call him to account? “Can I not do as I will with mine own?” is a fit reply to all such arrogant

enquiries; for man has sinned himself out of court, and there remains no right of appeal from the sentence of the Most High. Man is now in the position of a condemned criminal, whose only right is to be taken to the place of execution, and justly to suffer the due reward of his sins. Whatever difference of opinion, then, there might have been about the sovereignty of God as exercised upon creatures in the pure mass, there should be none, and there will be none, except in rebellious spirits, concerning the sovereignty of God over rebels who have sinned themselves into eternal ruin, and have lost all claim even to the mercy, much more the love of their offended Creator.

However, whether we all of us agree to the doctrine that God is sovereign or not, is a very little matter to him, for *he is so*. *De jure*, by right, he should be so; *de facto*, as matter of fact, he is so. It is a fact, concerning which you have only to open your eyes and see that God acts as a sovereign in the dispensation of his grace. Our Saviour, when he wished to quote instances of this, spake on this wise: many widows there were in Israel in the time of Elias the prophet, but unto none of these was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman who was a widow. Here was election! Elias is not sent to nourish and to be nourished by an Israelitish widow, but to a poor idolatress across the border, the blessing of the prophet's company is graciously granted. Again our Saviour says, "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, save only Naaman the Syrian"—not an Israelite at all, but one who bowed in the house of Rimmon. See how distinguishing grace finds out strange objects! Although our Saviour only gave these two instances, and no more, because they sufficed for his purpose, there are thousands of such cases on record. Look at man and the fallen angels. How is it that fallen angels are condemned to endless fire, and reserved in chains of darkness unto the great day? There is no Saviour for angels; no precious blood was ever shed for Satan. Lucifer falls, and falls for ever, never to hope again. There is no dispensation of mercy to those nobler spirits; but man who was made lower than the angels, is selected to be the object of divine redemption. What a great deep is here! This is a most illustrious and indisputable instance of the exercise of the prerogatives of divine sovereignty. Look again at the nations of the earth. Why is the gospel preached today, to us Englishmen? We have committed as many offenses—I will even venture to say we have perpetrated as many political crimes as other nations. Our eye is always prejudiced toward everything which is English; but if we read our history fairly, we can discover in the past, and detect in the present, grave and serious faults which disgrace our national banner. To pass by as minor offenses the late barbarities in Japan, and our frequent wars of extermination in New Zealand, and at the Cape, let it crimson the cheek of every inhabitant of the British Isles when we do but hint at the opium traffic with China. Yet to us the gospel is graciously sent, so that few nations enjoy it so fully as we do. It is true that Prussia and Holland hear the Word, and that Sweden and Denmark are comforted by the truth, but their candle burns but dimly; it is a poor flickering lamp which cheers their darkness, while in our own dear land, partly from the fact of our religious liberty, and yet more graciously through the late revival, the sun of the gospel shines brightly, and men rejoice in the light of day. Why this? Why no grace for the Japanese? Why no gospel preached to the inhabitants of Central Africa? Why was not the truth of God displayed in the Cathedral of Santiago, instead of the mummeries and follies which disgraced both dupes and deceivers, and were the incidental cause of the horrible burnings of that modern Tophet? Why today is not Rome, instead of being the seat of the beast, become the throne of Jesus Christ? I cannot tell you. But assuredly, divine sovereignty passing by many races of men, has been pleased to pitch upon the Anglo-Saxon family, that they may be as the Jews were aforetime, the custodians of divine truth, and the favorites of mighty grace.

We need not further speak upon national elections, for the principle is plainly carried out in individuals. See ye anything, my brethren, in that rich publican whose coffers are gorged with the results of his extortion, when he climbs the sycamore-tree, that his short stature may not prevent his seeing the Saviour—see ye anything in him why the Lord of glory should halt beneath that sycamore-tree and say, “Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house?” Can you find me a reason why yonder adulterous woman, who has had five husbands, and who is now living with a man who is not her husband, should constrain the Saviour to journey through Samaria that he might tell her of the water of life? If *you* can see anything, I cannot. Look at that bloodthirsty Pharisee, hurrying to Damascus with authority to hail men and women to prison, and shed their blood. The heat of midday cannot stop him, for his heart is hotter with religious rage than the sun with noontide rays. But see, he is arrested in his career, a brightness shines round about him; Jesus speaks from heaven the words of tender rebuke; and Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul, the apostle of God. Why? Wherefore? What answer can we give but this? “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Read the “Life of John Newton;” had he not ripened into the grossest of all villains? Turn to the history of John Bunyan, by his own confession the lowest of all blackguards, and tell me, can you find in either of these offenders any sort of reason why the Lord should have chosen them to be among the most distinguished heralds of the cross? No man in his senses will venture to assert that there was anything in Newton or Bunyan why they should engross the regard of the Most High. It was sovereignty, and nothing but sovereignty. Take your own case, dear friends, and that shall be the most convincing of all to you. If you know anything of your own heart, if you have formed a right estimate of your own character, if you have seriously considered your own position before the Most High, the reflection that God loveth you with an everlasting love, and that, therefore, with the bands of his kindness he has drawn you, will draw forth from you at once the exclamation, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for truth’s sake.” Brethren! the whole world is full of instances of divine sovereignty, for in every conversion some beam of the absolute dominion of God shines forth upon mankind.

When a sinner is anxiously disturbed about his soul’s affairs, his chief and main thought should not be upon this subject; when a man would escape from wrath and attain to heaven, his first, his last, his middle thought should be the cross of Christ. As an awakened sinner, I have vastly less to do with the secret purposes of God, than with his revealed commands. For a man to say, “Thou commandest all men to repent, yet will I not repent, because I do not know that I am chosen to eternal life,” is not only unreasonable, but exceedingly wicked. That it is unreasonable you will clearly see on a moment’s reflection. I know that bread does not of itself nourish my body, “For man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” It depends, therefore, upon God’s decree whether that bread shall nourish my body or not; for if he has not purposed that it shall, it may even choke me, and so become rather the cause of my death than the staff of my life. Do I therefore, when I am hungry, thrust my hands into my pockets and stand still, and refuse to help myself from the well-loaded table, because I do not know whether God has decreed that the bread shall nourish me or not? If I did, I should be an idiot or madman; or if in my senses, I should starve myself on such a pretence, I should richly deserve the burial of a suicide. I am not absolutely sure that there will be a harvest upon my field next year: unless God has ordained that the corn shall spring up and shall ripen, all my husbandry will be labor lost. There are worms in the earth, frosts in the air, birds in the sky, mildews in the winds—all of which may destroy my corn, and I may lose every single grain of the handful which I throw into my furrows.

Shall I, therefore, leave my farm to be one perpetual fallow, because I do not know whether God has decreed that there shall be a harvest or not next year? If I become a bankrupt—if I am unable to pay my rent—if the thorn and the thistle grow taller and higher, and if at last, my landlord thrusts me from my tenancy, all that men will say, will be, “It serves him right!”—because I was such a fool as to make the secret purposes of God a matter of paramount consideration, instead of performing my known duty. I am ill and sick: a physician comes to me with medicine. I am not clear that his medicine will heal me; it has healed a great many others, but if God has decreed that I shall die, I shall die, let me take any quantity of physic, or take none at all. My arm mortifies, but I will not have it cut off, because I do not know whether God has decreed that I shall die of mortification or not. Who but a crazed idiot, or raving maniac, would talk thus? When I put the case in that light, you all reply, “Nobody ever talks in that way; it is too absurd.” Of course, nobody does. And the fact is, even in the things of God, nobody really does argue in that way. A man may say, “I will not believe in Christ, because I am afraid I am not elected;” but the thing is so stupid, so absurd, that I do not believe that any man, not absolutely demented, can be so grossly foolish as to *believe* in his own reasoning. I am far rather inclined to think that is a wicked and perverse method of endeavoring to stultify conscience, on the theory that a bad excuse is better than none, and that even a foolish argument is better than having one’s mouth shut in speechless confusion.

But since men will everlastingly be getting to his point, and there are so many who are always giving this as a reason why they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because, “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,” I shall try, this morning, to talk with these people on their own ground; and I shall endeavor, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to show that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, so far from discouraging anybody, has not in it, if regarded aright, any sort of discouragement whatever, for any souls believing in Jesus Christ.

For one moment let me detain you from my object, while I reply to a very common method of misrepresenting the doctrine. It may be as well to start with a clear idea of what the doctrine really is. Our opponents put the case thus: suppose a father should condemn some of his children to extreme misery, and make others supremely happy, out of his own arbitrary will, would it be right and just? Would it not be brutal and detestable? My answer is, *of course, it would*; it would be execrable in the highest degree, and far, very far be it from us to impute such a course of action to the Judge of all the earth. But the case stated is not at all the one under consideration, but one as opposite from it as light from darkness. Sinful man is not now in the position of a well-deserving or innocent child, neither does God occupy the place of a complacent parent. We will suppose another case far nearer the mark, indeed, it is no supposition, but an exact description of the whole matter. A number of criminals, guilty of the most aggravated and detestable crimes, are righteously condemned to die, and die they must, unless the king shall exercise the prerogative vested in him, and give them a free pardon. If for good and sufficient reasons, known only to himself, the king chooses to forgive a certain number, and to leave the rest for execution, is there anything cruel or unrighteous here? If, by some wise means, the ends of justice can be even better answered by the sparing of the pardoned ones, than by their condemnation, while at the same time, the punishment of some tends to honor the justice of the lawgiver, who shall dare to find fault? None, I venture to say, but those who are the enemies of the state and of the king. And so may we well ask, “Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.” “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared

unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Who is he that shall impugn the mingled mercy and severity of heaven, or make the eternal God an offender, because "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy?" Let us now proceed to our proper subject, and endeavor to clear this truth from the terrors supposed to cluster around it.

I. Let us begin with this assertion, which we are absolutely sure is correct: **THIS DOCTRINE DOES NOT OPPOSE ANY COMFORT DERIVED FROM OTHER SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS.**

This doctrine, stern as it may seem to be, does not oppose the consolation which may be rightly derived from any other truth of revelation. Those who hold the free-will theory, say that our doctrine, that salvation is of the Lord alone, and that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, takes away from man the comfort derivable from *God's goodness*. God is good, infinitely good in his nature. God is love; he willeth not the death of any, but had rather that all should come to repentance. "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." Our friends very properly insist upon it that God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; that the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy; let me assure them that we shall never quarrel on these points, for we also rejoice in the same facts. Some of you have listened to my voice for these ten years: I ask you whether you have heard me utter a single sentence which at all contradicts the doctrine of God's great goodness? You may have so construed it by mistake, but no such teaching has passed my lip. Do I not, again and again, assert the universal benevolence of God—the infinite and overflowing goodness of the heart of the Most High? If any man can preach upon the great text, "God is love," though I may not be able to preach with the same eloquence, I will venture to view with him in the decision, heartiness, delight, earnestness, and plainness, with which he may expound his theme, be he who he may, or what he may. There is not the slightest shadow of a conflict between God's sovereignty and God's goodness. He may be a sovereign, and yet it may be absolutely certain that he will always act in the way of goodness and love. It is true that he will do as he wills; and yet it is quite certain that he always wills to do that which, in the widest view of it, is good and gracious. If the sons of sorrow fetch any comfort from the goodness of God, the doctrine of election will never stand in their way. Only mark, it does with a two-edged sword cut to pieces that false confidence in God's goodness which sends so many souls to hell. We have heard dying men singing themselves into the bottomless pit with this lullaby, "Yes, sir, I am a sinner, but God is merciful; God is good." Ah! dear friends, let such remember that God is just as well as good, and that he will by no means spare the guilty, except through the great atonement of his Son Jesus Christ. The doctrine of election, in a most blessedly honest manner does come in, and breaks the neck, once for all, of all this false and groundless confidence in the uncovenanted mercy of God. Sinner, you have no right to trust to the goodness of God out of Christ. There is no word in the whole Book of Inspiration, which gives the shadow of a hope to the man who will not believe in Jesus Christ. It says of him, "He that believeth not shall be damned." It declares of you, who are resting upon such a poor confidence as the unpromised favor of heaven, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous." If this be an evil to rob you of a false refuge, the doctrine of election certainly does this; but from the comfort properly derivable from the largest view of God's bounteous goodness and unlimited love, election does not detract a single grain.

Much comfort, too, flows to a troubled conscience from *the promise that God will hear prayer*. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be

opened.” If you ask anything of God in the name of Jesus Christ, you shall receive it. Now, there are some who imagine that they must not pray because they do not know whether they are God’s chosen people. If you refuse to pray on the ground of such bad reasoning as this, you must do so at your own expense; but do mark our solemn assurance, for which we have God’s warrant, that there is nothing in the sovereignty of God which at all militates against the great truth, that every sincerely seeking soul, craving divine grace by humble prayer through Jesus Christ, shall be a finder. There may be an Arminian brother here who would like to get into this pulpit and preach the cheering truth, that God hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. We not only accord him full liberty to preach this doctrine, but we will go as far as he can, and perhaps a little further, in the enunciation of that truth. We cannot perceive any discrepancy between personal election and the prevalence of prayer. Let those who can, vex their brains with the task of reconciling them; to us the wonder is how a man can believe the one without the other. Firmly must I believe that the Lord God will show mercy to whom he will show mercy, and have compassion on whom he will have compassion; but I know as assuredly that wherever there is a genuine prayer, God gave it; that wherever there is a seeker, God made him seek; consequently if God has made the man seek and made the man pray, there is evidence at once of divine election; and the fact stands true that none seek who shall not find.

Very much comfort also is supposed to be derived, and naturally so, from *the free invitations of the gospel*. “Ah,” cries one, “what a sweet thing it is that the Saviour cried, ‘Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ How delightful to read such a word as this, ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,’ Sir, my heart is encouraged when I find it written, ‘Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ But, sir, I dare not come because of the doctrine of election.” My dear hearer, I would not say anything harshly to you, but I must express my conviction that this is nothing but an idle excuse for not doing what you have no mind to do; because invitations of the most general character, nay, invitations which shall be universal in their scope, are perfectly consistent with the election of God. I have preached here, you know it, invitations as free as those which proceeded from the lips of Master John Wesley. Van Armin himself, the founder of the Arminian school, could not more honestly have pleaded with the very vilest of the vile to come to Jesus than I have done. Have I therefore felt in my mind that there was a contradiction here? No, nothing of the kind; because I know it to be my duty to sow beside all waters, and like the sower in the parable, to scatter the seed upon the stony ground, as well as upon the good land, knowing that election does not narrow the gospel call which is universal, but only affects the effectual call, which is and must be from the Spirit of God. My business is to give the general call, the Holy Spirit will see to its application to the chosen. O my dear hearers, God’s invitations are honest invitations to every one of you. He invites you; in the words of the parable he addresses, “All things are ready; come ye to the supper, my oxen and my fatlings are killed.” Nay, he saith to his ministers, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.” Though he foreknows who will come in, and has before all worlds ordained who shall taste of that supper, yet the invitation in its widest possible range, is a true and honest one; and if you accept it you shall find it so.

Furthermore, if we understand *the gospel* at all, the gospel lies in a nutshell. It is this:—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Or, to use Christ’s words, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” This promise is the

gospel. Now, the gospel is true, whatever else may be false. Whatever doctrine may or may not be of God, the gospel certainly is. The doctrine of sovereign grace is not contrary to the gospel, but perfectly consonant therewith. God has a people whom no man shall number, whom he hath ordained unto eternal life. This is, by no means, in conflict with the great declaration, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." If any man who ever lived, or ever shall live, believes in Jesus Christ, he hath eternal life. Election or no election, if you are resting upon the rock of ages you are saved. If you, as a guilty sinner, take the righteousness of Christ—if all black, and foul, and filthy, you come to wash in the fountain filled with blood, sovereignty or no sovereignty, rest assured of this, that you are redeemed from the wrath to come. O my dear friends, when you say, "I will not believe in Christ because of election," I can only say as Job did to his wife, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh." How dare you, because God reveals to you two things, which two things you cannot make square with one another—how dare you charge either the one or the other with being false? If I believe God, I am not only to believe what I can understand, but what I cannot understand; and if there were a revelation which I could comprehend and sum up as I may count five upon my fingers, I should be sure it did not come from God. But if it has some depths vastly too deep for me—some knots which I cannot untie—some mysteries which I cannot solve—I receive it with the greater confidence, because it now gives me swimming-room for my faith, and my soul bathes herself in the great sea of God's wisdom, praying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Let it be said over and over again, that there shall be no doubt about this matter, that if there be any comfort derivable from the gospel; if there be any sweet consolation flowing from the free invitations and the universal commands of divine truth, all those may be received and enjoyed by you, while you hold this doctrine of divine sovereignty as much as if you did not hold it, and received some wider scheme. Methinks I hear one voice say, "Sir, the only comfort I can ever have lies in *the infinite value of the precious blood of Christ*; O sir, it seems to me such a sweet thing that there is no sinner so black that Christ cannot wash away his sins, and no sinner so old that the meritorious virtue of that atonement cannot meet his case—not one in any rank or in any condition whom that blood cannot cleanse from all sin. Now, sir, if that be true, how can the doctrine of election be true?" My dear friend, you know in your own heart that the two things are not opposed to each other at all. For what does the doctrine of election say? It says that God has chosen and has saved some of the greatest sinners who ever lived, has cleansed some of the foulest sins ever committed, and that he is doing and will do the same to the world's end. So that the two things exactly tally. And I will venture to say that if in the fulness of a man's heart he shall say, "There is no sin except the one excepted sin, which cannot be forgiven," if he boldly announce that "All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men," and if he shall plead with power and earnestness that souls would now come to Christ and lay hold upon eternal life, he may go back to his Bible, and he may read every text teaching the sovereignty of God, and every passage upholding divine election; and he may feel that all these texts look him in the face, and say, "Well done, our spirit and your spirit are precisely the same; we have no conflict together; we are two great truths which came from the same God; we are alike the revelation of the Holy Ghost." But we leave that point. If there be any comfort, sinner, which you can truthfully and rightly get from any passage of Scripture, from any promise of God, from any invitation, from any open door of mercy, you may have it, for the doctrine of election does not rob you of one atom of the consolation which the truth of God can afford you.

II. But now will take another point for a moment. Our second head is, that THIS DOCTRINE HAS A MOST SALUTARY EFFECT UPON SINNERS. These may be divided into two classes: those who are *awakened*, and those who are *hardened* and *incurable*.

To the *awakened sinner*, next to the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of distinguishing grace is perhaps the most fraught with blessings and comfort. In the first place, the doctrine of election, applied by the Holy Ghost, *strikes dead for ever all the efforts of the flesh*. It is the end of Arminian preaching to make men active, to excite them to do what they can; but the very end and object of gospel preaching is to make men feel that they have no power of their own, and to lay them as dead, at the foot of God's throne. We seek, under God, to make them feel that all their strength must lie in the Strong One who is mighty to save. If I can convince a man that, let him do what he may, he cannot save himself; if I can show him that his own prayers and tears can never save him apart from the Spirit of God; if I can convince him that he must be born again from above; if I lead him to see that all which is born of the flesh is flesh, and only that which is born of the spirit is spirit, brethren! three parts of the great battle are already won. "I kill and I make alive," saith God: "when a man is killed the work is half done." "I wound and I heal: when a man is wounded his salvation is commenced." What! am I to set a sinner industriously to labor after eternal life by his own works? Then, indeed, am I an ambassador of hell. Am I to teach him that there is a goodness in him which he is to evolve, to polish, and educate and perfect, and so to save himself? Then I am a teacher of the beggarly elements of the law and not the gospel of Christ. Are we to set forth man's prayers, repentings, and humblings as the way of salvation; if so, let us renounce the righteousness of Christ at once, for the two will never stand together! I am a mischief-maker if I excite the activities of the flesh instead of pointing to the arms of the Redeemer! But if the potent hammer of electing sovereignty dashes out the brains of all a man's works, merits, doings, and willings, while it pronounces over the dead carcass this sentence: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;" then, the best thing is done for a sinner that can be done as a stepping-stone to the act of faith. When a man is weaned from self, and totally delivered from looking to the flesh for help, there is hope for him: and this the doctrine of divine sovereignty does through the Holy Spirit's power.

Again, this doctrine *gives the greatest hope to the really awakened sinner*. You know how the case stands. We are all prisoners condemned to die. God, as sovereign, has a right to pardon whom he pleases. Now, imagine a number of us shut up in a condemned cell, all guilty. One of the murderers says within himself: "I know that I have no reason to expect to be delivered. I am not rich: if I had some rich relations, like George Townley, I might be found insane, and delivered. But I am very poor; I am not educated. If I had the education of some men I might expect some consideration. I am not a man of rank and position; I am a man without merit or influence, therefore I cannot expect that I should be selected as one to be saved." No, I believe that if the present authorities of our land were the persons to be taken into consideration, a man who was poor might have a very poor chance of expecting any gratuitous deliverance. But when God is the great sovereign the case is different. For then, we argue thus: "Here am I; my salvation depends entirely upon the will of God: is there a chance for me? We take down a list of those whom he has saved, and we find that he saves the poor, the illiterate, the wicked, the godless, and the worst of the worst, the base things, and things that are despised. Well, what do we say? Then, why may he not choose me? Why not save me? If I am to look for some reason in myself why I should be saved, I shall never find any, and consequently never shall have a hope. But if I am to be saved for no reason at all but

that God wills to save me, ah! then there is hope for me. I will to the gracious King approach, I will do as he bids me, I will trust in his dear Son, and I shall be saved." So that this doctrine opens the door of hope to the worst of the worst, and the only persons it discourages are the Pharisees, who say: "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are"—those proud, haughty spirits who say: "No! if I am not to be saved for something good in myself, then I will be damned!" as damned they will be with a vengeance, too.

Moreover, do not you see, dear friends, how *the doctrine of election comforts the sinner in the matter of power*. His complaint is, "I find I have no power to believe; I have no spiritual power of any kind." Election stoops down and whispers in his ear—"But if God wills to save you, he gives the power, gives the life, and gives the grace; and therefore since he has given that power and might to others as weak as you, why not to you? Have courage, look to the cross of Christ and live." And oh! what *emotions of gratitude*, what throbbings of *love* does this doctrine cause in human hearts. "Why," saith the man, "I am saved simply because God would save me, not because I deserved it, but because his loving heart would save me; then, I will love him, I will live to him, I will spend and be spent for him." Such a man cannot be proud, I mean not consistently with the doctrine. He lies *humbly* at God's feet. Other men may boast of what they are, and how they have own eternal life by their own goodness, but I cannot. If God had left me, I had been in hell with others; and if I go to heaven, I must cast my crown at the feet of the grace which brought me there. Such a man will become *kind* to others. He will hold his opinions, but he will not hold them savagely, nor teach them bitterly, because he will say, "If I have light, and others have not, my light was given me from God, therefore, I have no cause to plume myself upon it. I will try to spread that light, but not by anger and abuse. For why should I blame those who cannot see, for could I have seen if God had not opened my blind eyes?" Every virtue this doctrine fosters, and every vice it kills, when the Holy Spirit so uses it. Pride it treads under foot, and humble, trustful confidence in the mercy of God in Christ, it cherishes as a darling child.

My time is gone; but I wanted to have said a word as to the effect of this gospel upon *incorrigible sinners*. I will just say this: I know what the effect of it ought to be. What do you say who have made up your minds not to repent, you who care not for God? Why, you believe that any day you like you can turn to God, since God is merciful, and will save you; and therefore, you walk about the world as comfortably as possible, thinking it all depends upon you, and that you will get into heaven just at the eleventh hour. Ah! man, that is not your case. See where you are. Do you see that moth fluttering in my hand! Imagine it to be there. With this finger of mine I can crush it—in a moment. Whether it shall live or not depends absolutely upon whether I choose to crush it or let it go. That is precisely your position at the present moment. God can damn you now. Nay, let us say to you, "Yours is a worse position than that." There are some seven persons now doomed for murder and piracy on the high seas. You can clearly say that their lives depend upon Her Majesty's pleasure. If Her Majesty chooses to pardon them she can. If not, when the fatal morning comes, the bolt will be drawn and they will be launched into eternity. That is your case, sinner. *You are condemned already*. This world is but one huge condemned cell in which you are kept, until the execution morning comes. If you are ever to be pardoned, *God must do it*. You cannot escape from him by flight; you cannot bribe him by actions of your own. You are absolutely in the hand of God, and if he leaves you where you are and as you are, your eternal ruin is as certain as your existence. Now, does not this make some sort of trembling come upon you? Perhaps not; it makes you angry. Well, if it does, that will not frighten me, because there are some of you who will never be good

for anything until you are angry. I believe it is no ill sign when some persons are angry with the truth. It shows that the truth has pierced them. If an arrow penetrates my flesh, I do not like the arrow, and if you kick and struggle against this truth, it will not alarm me; I shall have some hope that a wound is made. If this truth should provoke you to think, it will have done for some of you one of the greatest things in the world. It is not your perverse thinking which frightens me; it is the utterly thoughtless way in which you go on. If you had sense enough to consider these things and fight against them, I should then have some faint hope of you. But alas! many of you have not sense enough, you say, "Yes, yes, it is all true," you accept it, but then it has no effect upon you. The gospel rolls over you, like oil adown a slab of marble, and produces no effect.

If you are at all right in heart, you will begin to see what your state is, and the next thing that will startle your mind will be the reflection: "Is it so? am I absolutely in God's hands? can he save me or damn me as he will? Then, I will cry to him, 'O God, save me from the wrath to come—from eternal torment—from banishment from thy presence. Save me, O God! What wouldst thou have me to do? Oh! what wouldst thou have me to do, that I may find thy favor and live?'" Then comes the answer to you:—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved;" for "whosoever believeth in him shall never perish, but shall have eternal life."

O that God might bless this divine doctrine to you. I have never preached this doctrine without conversions, and I believe I never shall. At this moment God will cause his truth to attract your hearts to Jesus, or to affright you to him. May you be drawn as the bird is drawn by the lure, or may you be driven as a dove is hunted by the hawk into the clefts of the rock. Only may you be sweetly compelled to come. May my Lord fulfill this desire of my heart. O that God may grant me your souls for my hire; and to him shall be the glory, world without end. Amen.

Enduring to the End

A Sermon

(No. 554)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 14th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“He that endureth to the end shall be saved.”—Matthew 10:22.

THIS PARTICULAR TEXT was originally addressed *to the apostles* when they were sent to teach and preach in the name of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps bright visions floated before their minds, of honor and esteem among men. It was no mean dignity to be among the twelve first heralds of salvation to the sons of Adam. Was a check needed to their high hopes? Perhaps so. Lest they should enter upon their work without having counted its cost, Christ gives them a very full description of the treatment which they might expect to receive, and reminds them that it was not the commencement of their ministry which would win them their reward, but “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” It would be well if every youthful aspirant to the gospel ministry would remember this, if merely to put our hand to the plough proved us to be called of God, how many would he found so; but alas, too many look back and prove unworthy of the kingdom. The charge of Paul to Timothy, is a very necessary exhortation to every young minister: “Be thou faithful unto death.” It is not to be faithful for a time, but to be “faithful *unto death*,” which will enable a man to say, “I have fought a good fight.” How many dangers surround the Christian minister! As the officers in an army are the chosen targets of the sharpshooters, so are the ministers of Christ. The king of Syria said to his servants, “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel;” even so the arch-fiend makes his main attack upon the ministers of God. From the first moment of his call to the work, the preacher of the Word will be familiar with temptation. While he is yet in his youth, there are multitudes of the softer temptations to turn the head and trip the feet of the youthful herald of the cross; and when the blandishments of early popularity have passed away, as soon they must, the harsh croak of slander, and the adder’s tongue of ingratitude assail him, he finds himself stale and flat where once he was flattered and admired; nay, the venom of malice succeeds to the honeyed morsels of adulation. Now, let him gird his loins and fight the good fight of faith. In his after days, to provide fresh matter Sabbath after Sabbath, to rule as in the sight of God, to watch over the souls of men, to weep with them who weep, to rejoice with those who do rejoice, to be a nursing father unto young converts, sternly to rebuke hypocrites, to deal faithfully with backsliders, to speak with solemn authority and paternal pathos to those who are in the first stages of spiritual decline, to carry about with him the care of the souls of hundreds, is enough to make him grow old while yet he is young, and to mar his visage with the lines of grief, till, like the Savior, at the age of thirty years, men shall count him nearly fifty. “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” said the adversaries of Christ to him when he was but thirty-two. If the minister should fall, my brethren; if, set upon a pinnacle, he should be cast down; if, standing in slippery places, he should falter; if the standard-bearer fall, as fall full well he may, what mischief is done to the Church, what shouts are heard among the adversaries, what dancings are seen among the daughters of Philistia! How hath God’s banner been stained in the dust, and the name of Jesus

cast into the mire! When the minister of Christ turns traitor, it is as if the pillars of the house did tremble; every stone in the structure feels the shock. If Satan can succeed in overturning the preachers of the Word, it is as if yon broad-spreading tree should suddenly fall beneath the axe; prone in the dust it lies to wither and to rot; but where are the birds of the air which made their nests among its boughs, and whither fly those beasts of the field which found a happy shadow beneath its branches? Dismay hath seized them, and they flee in affright. All who were comforted by the preacher's word, strengthened by his example, and edified by his teaching, are filled with humiliation and grief, crying, "Alas! my brother." By these our manifold dangers and weighty responsibilities, we may very justly appeal to you who feed under our ministry, and beseech you, "Brethren, pray for us." Well, we know that though our ministry be received of the Lord Jesus, if hitherto we have been kept faithful by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet it is only he who endureth to the end who shall be saved.

But, my brethren, how glorious is the sight of the man who does endure to the end as a minister of Christ. I have photographed upon my heart just now, the portrait of one very, very dear to me, and I think I may venture to produce a rough sketch of him, as no mean example of how honorable it is to endure to the end. This man began while yet a youth to preach the Word. Sprung of ancestors who had loved the Lord and served his Church, he felt the glow of holy enthusiasm. Having proved his capabilities, he entered college, and after the close of its course, settled in a spot where for more than fifty years he continued his labors. In his early days, his sober earnestness and sound doctrine were owned of God in many conversions both at home and abroad. Assailed by slander and abuse, it was his privilege to live it all down. He outlived his enemies, and though he had buried a generation of his friends, yet he found many warm hearts clustering round him to the last. Visiting his flock, preaching in his own pulpit, and making very many journeys to other Churches, years followed one another so rapidly, that he found himself the head of a large tribe of children and grandchildren, most of them walking in the truth. At the age of fourscore years, he preached on still, until laden with infirmities, but yet as joyful and as cheerful as in the heyday of his youth, his time had come to die. He was able to say truthfully, when last he spake to me, "I do not know that my testimony for God has ever altered, as to the fundamental doctrines; I have grown in experience, but from the first day until now, I have had no new doctrines to teach my hearers. I have had to make no confessions of error on vital points, but have been held fast to the doctrines of grace, and can now say that I love them better than ever." Such an one was he, as Paul, the aged, longing to preach so long as his tottering knees could bear him to the pulpit. I am thankful that I had such a grandsire. He fell asleep in Christ but a few hours ago, and on his dying bed talked as cheerfully as men can do in the full vigor of their health. Most sweetly he talked of the preciousness of Christ, and chiefly of the security of the believer; the truthfulness of the promise; the immutability of the covenant; the faithfulness of God, and the infallibility of the divine decree. Among other things which he said at the last was this, which is, we think, worth your treasuring in your memories. "Dr Watts sings—

'Firm as *the earth* thy gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust.'

What, Doctor, is it not firmer than that? Could you not find a better comparison? Why, the earth will give way beneath our feet one day or another, if we rest on it. The comparison will not do. The Doctor was much nearer the mark, when he said—

"Firm as his throne his promise stands,
And he can well secure

What I've committed to his hands.

'Till the decisive hour.'"

"Firm as his throne," said he, "he must cease to be king before he can break his promise, or lose his people. Divine sovereignty makes us all secure." He fell asleep right quietly, for his day was over, and the night was come, what could he do better than go to rest in Jesus? Would God it may be our lot to preach the Word, so long as we breathe, standing fast unto the end in the truth of God; and if we see not our sons and grandsons testifying to those doctrines which are so dear to us, yet may we see our children walking in the truth. I know of nothing, dear friends, which I would choose to have, as the subject of my ambition for life, than to be kept faithful to my God to death, still to be a soul-winner, still to be a true herald of the cross, and testify the name of Jesus to the last hour. It is only such who in the ministry shall be saved.

Our text, however, occurs again in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, at the fourteenth verse, upon which occasion it was not addressed to the apostles, but to the disciples. The disciples, looking upon the huge stones which were used in the construction of the Temple, admired the edifice greatly, and expected their Lord to utter a few words of passing encomium; instead of which, he, who came not to be an admirer of architecture, but to hew living stones out of the quarry of nature, to build them up into a spiritual temple turned their remarks to practical account, by warning them of a time of affliction, in which there should be such trouble as had never been before, and he added, "No, nor ever shall be." He described false prophets as abounding, and the love of many as waxing cold, and warned them that "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." So that this solemn truth applies to every one of you.

The Christian man, though not called to the post of danger in witnessing publicly of the grace of God, is destined in his measure to testify concerning Jesus, and in his proper sphere and place, to be a burning and a shining light. He may not have the cares of a Church, but he hath far more, the cares of business: he is mixed up with the world; he is compelled to associate with the ungodly. To a great degree, he must, at least six days in the week, walk in an atmosphere uncongenial with his nature: he is compelled to hear words which will never provoke him to love and good works, and to behold actions whose example is obnoxious. He is exposed to temptations of every sort and size, for this is the lot of the followers of the Lamb. Satan knows how useful is a consistent follower of the Savior, and how much damage to Christ's cause an inconsistent professor may bring, and therefore he emptieth out all his arrows from his quiver that he may wound, even unto death, the soldier of the cross. My brethren, many of you have had a far longer experience than myself; you know how stern is the battle of the religious life, how you must contend, even unto blood, striving against sin. Your life is one continued scene of warfare, both without and within; perhaps even now you are crying with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" A Christian's career is always fighting, never ceasing; always ploughing the stormy sea, and never resting till he reaches the port of glory. If my God shall preserve you, as preserve you he must, or else you are not his; if he shall keep you, as keep you he will if you have committed your souls to his faithful guardianship, what an honor awaits you! I have in my mind's eye, just now, one who has been for about sixty years associated with this Church, and who this week, full of years, and ripe for heaven, was carried by angels into the Savior's bosom. Called by divine grace, while yet young, he was united with the Christian Church early in life. By divine grace, he was enabled to maintain a consistent and honorable character for many years; as an officer of this Church, he was acceptable among his brethren, and useful both by his godly example and

sound judgment; while in various parts of the Church of Christ, he earned unto himself a good degree. He went last Sabbath day, twice to the house of God where he was accustomed of late years to worship, enjoying the Word, and feasting at the Communion-table with much delight. He went to his bed without having any very serious illness upon him, having spent his last evening upon earth in cheerful conversation with his daughters. Ere the morning light, with his head leaning upon his hand, he had fallen asleep in Christ, having been admitted to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. As I think of my brother, though of late years I have seen but little of him, I can but rejoice in the grace which illuminated his pathway. When I saw him, the week before his departure, although full of years, there was little or no failure in mind. He was just the picture of an aged saint waiting for his Master, and willing to work in his cause while life remained. I refer, as most of you know, to Mr. Samuel Gale. Let us thank God and take courage—thank God that he has preserved in this case, a Christian so many, many years, and take courage to hope that there will be found in this Church, many, at all periods, whose grey heads shall be crowns of glory. “He that endureth to the end,” and only he “shall be saved.”

But, dear friends, perseverance is not the lot of the few; it is not left to laborious preachers of the Word, or to consistent Church-officers, it is the common lot of every believer in the Church. It must be so, for only thus can they prove that they are believers. It must be so, for only by their perseverance can the promise be fulfilled, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” Without perseverance, they cannot be saved; and, as saved they must be, persevere they shall through divine grace.

I shall now, with brevity and earnestness, as God enables me, speak upon our text thus: *perseverance is the badge of saints—the target of our foes—the glory of Christ—and the care of all believers.*

I. First, then, PERSEVERANCE IS THE BADGE OF TRUE SAINTS. *It is their Scriptural mark.* How am I to know a Christian? By his words? Well, to some degree, words betray the man; but a man’s speech is not always the copy of his heart, for with smooth language many are able to deceive. What doth our Lord say? “Ye shall know them *by their fruits.*” But how am I to know a man’s fruits? By watching him one day? I may, perhaps, form a guess of his character by being with him for a single hour, but I could not confidently pronounce upon a man’s true state even by being with him for a week. George Whitfield was asked what he thought of a certain person’s character. “I have never lived with him,” was his very proper answer. If we take the run of a man’s life, say for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and, if by carefully watching, we see that he brings forth the fruits of grace through the Holy Spirit, our conclusion may be drawn very safely. As the truly magnetized needle in the compass, with many deflections, yet does really and naturally point to the pole; so, if I can see that despite infirmities, my friend sincerely and constantly aims at holiness, then I may conclude with something like certainty, that he is a child of God. Although works do not justify a man before God, they do justify a man’s profession before his fellows. I cannot tell whether you are justified in calling yourself a Christian except by your works; by your works, therefore, as James saith, shall ye be justified. You cannot by your words convince me that you are a Christian, much less by your experience, which I cannot see but must take on trust from you; but your actions will, unless you be an unmitigated hypocrite, speak the truth, and speak the truth loudly too. If your course is as the shining light which shineth more unto the perfect day, I know that yours is the path of the just. All other conclusions are only the judgment of charity such as we are bound

to exercise; but this is as far as man can get it, the judgment of certainty when a man's life has been consistent through out.

Moreover, *analogy shows us that it is perseverance which must mark the Christian*. How do I know the winner at the foot-race? There are the spectators, and there are the runners. What strong men! what magnificent muscles! what thews and sinews! Yonder is the goal, and there it is that I must judge who is the winner, not here, at the starting-point, for "They which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize." I may select this one, or that other person, as likely to win, but I cannot be absolutely sure until the race is over. There they fly! see how they press forward with straining muscles; but one has tripped, another faints, a third is out of breath, and others are far behind. One only wins—and who is he? Why, he who continueth to the end, So I may gather from the analogy, which Paul constantly allows us, from the ancient games, that only he who continueth till he reaches the goal may be accounted a Christian at all. A ship starts on a voyage to Australia—if it stops at Madeira, or returns after reaching the Cape, would you consider that it ought to be called an emigrant ship for New South Wales? It must go the whole voyage, or it does not deserve the name. A man has begun to build a house, and has erected one side of it—do you consider him a builder if he stops there, and fails to cover it in or to finish the other walls? Do we give men praise for being warriors because they know how to make one desperate charge, but lose the campaign? Have we not, of late, smiled at the boasting despatches of commanders, in fights where both combatants fought with valor, and yet neither of them had the common sense to push on to reap the victory? What was the very strength of Wellington, but that when a triumph had been achieved, he knew how to reap the harvest which had been sown in blood? And he only is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who continueth till war's trumpet is blown no more. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon: he said, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, "Excelsior;" or, if it be not, you know not the noble spirit of God's princes. But why do I multiply illustrations, when all the world rings with the praise of perseverance?

Moreover, *the common-sense judgment of mankind* tells us, that those who merely begin and do not hold out, will not be saved. Why, *if every man would be saved who began to follow Christ, who would be damned?* In such a country as this, the most of men have at least one religious spasm in their lives. I suppose that there is not a person before me, who at some time or other did not determine to be a pilgrim. You, Mr. Pliable, were induced by a Christian friend, who had some influence with you, to go with him some short way, till you came to the Slough of Despond, and you thought yourself very wise when you scrambled out on that side which was nearest to your own home. And even you, Mr. Obstinate, are not always dogged; you have fits of thoughtfulness and intervals of tenderness. My hearer, how impressed you were at the prayer meeting! how excited you were at that revival service! When you heard a zealous brother preach at the theater what an impression was produced! Ah! yes; the shop was shut up for a Sunday or two; you did not swear or get drunk for nearly a month, but you could not hold on any longer. Now, if those who were to begin were saved, why you would be secure, though you are at the present time as far from anything like religion, as the darkness at midnight is from the blazing light of midday. Besides, common sense shows us, I say, that a man must hold on, or else he cannot be saved, because *the very worst of men are those who begin and then give up*. If you would turn over all the black pages of villany, to find the name of the son of perdition, where would you find it? Why, among the apostles. The man who had wrought miracles and preached the gospel, sold his Master for thirty pieces of

silver—Judas Iscariot, betrays the Son of Man with a kiss. Where is a worse name than that of Simon Magus? Simon “believed also,” says the Scripture, and yet he offered the apostles money if they would sell to him the Holy Ghost. What an infamous notoriety Demas has obtained, who loved the present evil world! How much damage did Alexander the coppersmith do to Paul? “He did me much evil,” said he, “the Lord reward him according to his works.” And yet that Alexander was once foremost in danger, and even exposed his own person in the theater at Ephesus, that he might rescue the apostle. There are none so bad as those who once seemed to be good. “If the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” That which is best when ripe, is worst when rotten; liquor which is sweetest in one stage, becomes sourest in another. Let not him that putteth on his armor boast as though he putteth it off; for even common sense teaches you, that it is not to begin, but to continue to the end which marks the time of the child of God.

But we need not look to analogy and to mere common sense. *Scripture is plain enough.* What says John? “They went out from us.” Why? Were they ever saints? Oh! no—“They went out from us, because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us, but they went out from us, that it might be manifest that they were not of us.” They were no Christians, or else they had not thus apostatized. Peter saith, “It hath happened unto them according to the proverb, the dog hath returned to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire,” indicating at once most clearly that the dog, though it did vomit, always was a dog. When men disgorge their sins unwillingly, not giving them up because they dislike them, but because they cannot retain them; if a favorable time comes, they will return to swallow once more what they seemed to abandon. The sow that was washed—ay, bring it into the parlour, introduce it among society; it was washed, and well-washed too; whoever saw so respectable a member of the honorable confraternity of swine before? Bring it in! Yes, but will you keep it there? Wait and see. Because you have not transformed it into a man, on the first occasion it will be found wallowing in the mire. Why? Because it was not a man, but a sow. And so we think we may learn from multitudes of other passages, if we had time to quote them, that those who go back into perdition are not saints at all, for perseverance is the badge of the righteous. “The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.” We not only get life by faith, but faith sustains it; “the just shall live by faith;” “but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

What we have learned from Scripture, dear friends, has been abundantly confirmed *by observation.* Every day would I bless God that in so numerous a Church we have comparatively so few who have proved false; but I have seen enough, and the Lord knoweth, more than enough, to make me very jealous over you with a godly jealousy. I could tell of many an instance of men and women who did ran well. “What did hinder them that they should not obey the truth?” I remember a young man of whom I thought as favourably as of any of you, and I believe he did at that time deserve our favorable judgment. He walked among us, one of the most hopeful of our sons, and we hoped that God would make him serviceable to his cause. He fell into bad company. There was enough conscience left, after a long course of secret sin, to make him feel uncomfortable in his wickedness, though he did not give it up; and when at last his sin stared him in the face, and others knew it, so ashamed was he, that, though he bore the Christian name, he took poison that he might escape the shame which he had brought upon himself. He was rescued—rescued by skill and the good providence of God; but where he is, and what he is, God only knoweth, for he had taken another poison more deadly still which made him the slave of his own lusts.

Do not think it is the young alone, however. It is a very lamentable fact that there are, in proportion, more backslidings among the old than the young; and, if you want to find a great sinner in that respect, you will find him, surely, nine times out of ten, with grey hairs on his head. Have I not frequently mentioned that you do not find in Scripture, many cases of young people going astray. You do find believers sinning, but they were all getting old men. There is Noah—no youth. There is Lot, when drunken—no child. There is David with Bathsheba,—no young man in the heat of passion. There is Peter denying his Lord—no boy at the time. These were men of experience and knowledge and wisdom. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

With sorrow do we remember one whom, years ago, we heard pray among us, and sweetly too; esteemed and trusted by us all. I remember a dear brother saying very kindly, but not too wisely, “If he is not a child of God, I am not.” But what did he, my brethren, to our shame and sorrow, but go aside to the very worst and foulest of sins, and where is he now? Perhaps the ale-house may tell or worse places still. So have we seen, that earth’s sun may be eclipsed, earth’s stars may go out, and all human glory melt into shame. No true child of God perishes—hold that fast; but this is the badge of a true child of God: that a man endures to the end; and if a man does not hold on, but slinks back to his old master, and once again fits on the old collar, and wears again the Satanic yoke, there is sure proof that he has never come out of the spiritual Egypt through Jesus Christ, his leader, and hath never obtained that eternal life which cannot die, because it is born of God. I have thus then, dear friends, said enough to prove, I think, beyond dispute, that the true badge of the Christian is perseverance, and that without it, no man has proved himself to be a child of God.

II. Secondly, PERSEVERANCE IS THEREFORE, THE TARGET OF ALL OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.

We have many adversaries. Look at *the world!* The world does not object to our being Christians for a time; it will cheerfully overlook all misdemeanors in that way, if we will now shake hands and be as we used to be. Your old companions who used to call you such *good fellows*, when you were bad fellows, would they not very readily forgive you for having been Christians, if you would just go back and be as in days gone by? Oh! certainly, they would look upon your religion as a freak of folly, but they would very easily overlook it, if you would give it up for the future. “O!” saith the world, “come back; come back to my arms once more; be enamored of me, and though thou hast spoken some hard words against me, and done some cruel deeds against me, I will cheerfully forgive thee.” The world is always stabbing at the believer’s perseverance. Sometimes she will bully him back; she will persecute him with her tongue—cruel mockings shall be used; and at another time, she will cozen him, “Come thou back to me; O come thou back! Wherefore should we disagree? Thou art made for me, and I am made for thee!” And she beckons so gently and so sweetly, even as Solomon’s harlot of old. This is the one thing with her, that thou shouldst cease to be a pilgrim, and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair.

Your second enemy, *the flesh*. What is its aim? “Oh!” cries the flesh, “we have had enough of this; it is weary work being a pilgrim, come, give it up.” Sloth says, “Sit still where thou art. Enough is as good as a feast, at least, of this tedious thing.” Then, lust crieth, “Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least, a furlough from this constant warfare?” The flesh cares not how soft the chain, so that it does but hold us fast, and prevent our pressing on to glory.

Then comes in the devil, and sometimes he beats the big drum, and cries with a thundering voice “There is no heaven; there is no God; you are a fool to persevere.” Or, changing his tactics, he cries, “Come back! I will give thee a better treatment than thou hadst before. Thou thoughtest

me a hard master, but that was misrepresentation; come and try me; I am a different devil from what I was ten years ago; I am respectable to what I was then. I do not want you to go back to the low theater or the casino; come with me, and be a respectable lover of pleasure. I tell thee, I can dress in broad cloth as well as in corderoy, and I can walk in the courts of kings, as well as in the courts and alleys of the beggar. O come back!" he saith, and make thyself one of mine." So that this hellish trinity, the world, tme flesh, and the devil, all stab at the Christian's perseverance.

His perseverance in service they will frequently attack: "What profit is there is in serving God? The devil will say to me sometimes, as he did to Jonah, "Flee thou unto Tarshish, and do not stop in this Nineveh; they will not believe thy word, though thou speak in God's name?" To you he will say, "Why, you are so busy all the six days of the week, what is the good of spending your Sunday with a parcel of noisy brats in a Sunday School? Why go about with those tracts in the streets? Much good you will get from it. Would not you be better with having a little rest?" Ah! that word *rest*—some of us are very fond of it; but we ought to recollect that we spoil it if we try to get it *here*, for rest is only beyond the grave. We shall have rest enough when once we come into the presence of our Lord. Perseverance in service, then, the devil would murder outright.

If he cannot stay us in service, he will try to prevent our perse verance *in suffering*. "Why be patient any longer?" says he; "why sit on that dunghill, scraping your sores with a potsherd?—curse God, and die. You have been always poor since you have been a Christian; your business does not prosper; you see, you cannot make money unless you do as others do. You must go with the times, or else you will not get on. Give it all up. Why be always suffering like this?" Thus the foul spirit tempts us. Or you may have espoused some good cause, and the moment you open your mouth, many laugh and try to put you down. "Well," says the devil, "be put down—what is the use of it? Why make yourself singularly eccentric, and expose yourself to perpetual martyrdom? It is all very nice," saith he, "if you will be a martyr, to be burnt at once, and have done with it; but to hang, like Lord Cobham, to be roasted over a slow fire for days, is not comfortable. Why," saith the tempter, "why be always suffering—give it up." You see, then, it is also perseverance in suffering which the devil shooteth at.

Or, perhaps, it is perseverance *in steadfastness*. The love of many has waxed cold, but you remain zealous. "Well," saith he, "what is the good of your being so zealous? Other people are good enough people, you could not censure them: why do you want to be more righteous than they are? Why should you be pushing the Church before you, and dragging the world behind you? What need is there for you to go two marches in one day? Is not one enough? Do as the rest do; loiter as they do. Sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out as other virgins do." Thus is our perseverance in steadfastness frequently assailed.

Or else, it will be *our doctrinal sentiments*. "Why," says Satan, "do you hold to these denominational creeds? Sensible men are getting more liberal, they are giving away what does not belong to them—God's truth; they are removing the old landmarks. Acts of uniformity are to be repealed, articles and creeds are to be laid aside as useless lumber, not necessary for this very enlightened age; fall in with this, and be an Anythingarian. Believe that black is white; hold that truth and a lie are very much akin to one another, and that it not does matter which we do believe, for we are all of us right, though we flatly contradict each other; that the Bible is a nose of wax to fit any face; that it does not teach anything material, but you may make it say anything you like. Do that," saith he, "and be no longer firm in your opinion."

I think I have proved—and need not waste more words about it—that perseverance is the target for all enemies. Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armor, and cry mightily unto God, that by his Spirit you may endure to the end.

III. Thirdly, brethren, PERSEVERANCE IS THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

That he makes all his people persevere to the end, is greatly to his honor. If they should fall away and perish, every office, and work, and attribute of Christ would be stained in the mire. If any one child of God should perish, where were Christ's covenant engagements? What is he worth as a mediator of the covenant and the surety of it, if he hath not made the promises sure to all the seed? My brethren, Christ is made a leader and commander of the people, to bring many souls into glory; but if he doth not bring them into glory, where is the captain's honor? Where is the efficacy of the precious blood, if it does not effectually redeem? If it only redeemeth for a time and then suffereth us to perish, where is its value? If it only blots out sin for a few weeks, and then permits that sin to return and to remain upon us, where, I say, is the glory of Calvary, and where is the lustre of the wounds of Jesus? He lives, he lives to intercede, but how can I honor his intercession, if it be fruitless? Does he not pray, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" and if they be not finally brought to be with him where he is, where is the honor of his intercession? Hath not the Pleader failed, and the great Mediator been dismissed without success? Is he not at this day in union with his people? But what is the value of union to Christ, if that union does not insure salvation? Is he not to-day at the right hand of God, preparing a place for his saints; and will he prepare a place for them, and then lose them on the road? Oh! can it be that he procures the harp and the crown, and will not save souls to use them? My brethren, the perishing of one true child of God, would be such dishonor to Jesus, that I cannot think of it without considering it as blasphemy. One true believer in hell! Oh! what laughter in the pit—what defiance, what unholy mirth! "Ah! Prince of life and glory," saith the prince of the pit, "I have defeated thee; I have snatched the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive I have delivered; I have torn a jewel from thy crown. See, here it is! Thou didst redeem this soul with blood, and yet it is in hell." Hear what Satan cries—"Christ suffered for this soul, and yet God makes it suffer for itself. Where is the justice of God?" Christ came from heaven to earth to save this soul, and failed in the attempt, and I have him here;" and as he plunges that soul into deeper waves of woe, the shout of triumph goes up more and more blasphemously—"We have conquered heaven! We have rent the eternal covenant; we have foiled the purposes of God; we have defeated his decree; we have triumphed over the power of the Mediator, and cast his blood to the ground!" Shall it ever be? Atrocious question! It *can never be*. They who are in Christ are saved. They whom Jesus Christ hath really taken into union with himself, shall be with him where he is. But how are you to know whether you are in union with Christ? My brethren, you can only know it by obeying the apostle's words, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

IV. I close, therefore, with but a hint on the last point, PERSEVERANCE SHOULD BE THE GREAT CARE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN—his daily and his nightly care. O beloved! I conjure you by the love of God, and by the love of your own souls, be faithful unto death. Have you difficulties? You must conquer them. Hannibal crossed the Alps, for his heart was full of fury against Rome; and you must cross the Alps of difficulty, for I trust your heart is full of hatred of sin. When Mr. Smeaton had built the lighthouse upon the Eddystone, he looked out anxiously after a storm to see if the edifice was still there, and it was his great joy when he could see it still standing, for a former builder had constructed an edifice which he thought to be indestructible, and expressed

a wish that he might be in it in the worst storm which ever blew, and he was so, and neither himself nor his lighthouse were ever seen afterwards. Now you have to be exposed to multitudes of storms; you must be in your lighthouse in the worst storm which ever blew; build firmly then on the Rock of Ages, and make sure work for eternity, for if you do these things, ye shall never fall. For this Church's sake, I pray you do it; for nothing can dishonor and weaken a Church so much as the falls of professors. A thousand rivers flow to the sea, and make rich the meadows, but no man heareth the sound thereof; but if there be one cataract, its roaring will be heard for miles, and every traveler will mark the fall. A thousand Christians can scarcely do such honor to their Master as one hypocrite can do dishonor to him. If you have ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, pray that your foot slip not. It would be infinitely better to bury you in the earth than see you buried in sin. If I must be lost, God grant it may not be as an apostate. If I must, after all, perish, were it not better never to have known the way of righteousness than after having known the theory of it, and something of the enjoyment of it, turn again to the beggarly elements of the world? Let your prayer be not against death, but against sin. For your own sake, for the Church's sake, for the name of Christ's sake, I pray you do this. But ye cannot persevere except by much watchfulness in the closet, much carefulness over every action, much dependance upon the strong hand of the Holy Spirit who alone can make you stand. Walk and live as in the sight of God, knowing where your great strength lieth, and depend upon it you shall yet sing that sweet doxology in Jude, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." A simple faith brings the soul to Christ, Christ keeps the faith alive; that faith enables the believer to persevere, and so he enters heaven. May that be your lot and mine for Christ's sake. Amen.

Nothing But Leaves

A Sermon

(No. 555)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 21st, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“He found nothing but leaves.”—Mark 11:13.

MOST of the miracles of Moses were grand displays of divine justice. What were the first ten wonders but ten plagues? The same may be said of the prophets, especially of Elijah and Elisha. Was it not significant both of the character and mission of Elias when he called fire from heaven upon the captains of fifties; nor was he upon whom his mantle descended less terrible when the she-bears avenged him upon the mockers. It remained for our incarnate Lord to reveal the heart of God. The only begotten was full of grace and truth, and in his miracles pre-eminently God is set forth to us as LOVE. With the exception of the miracle before us, and perhaps, a part of another, all the miracles of Jesus were entirely benevolent in their character; indeed this one is no exception in reality, but only in appearance. The raising of the dead, the feeding of the multitude, the stilling of the tempest, the healing of diseases—what were all these but displays of the lovingkindness of God? What was this to teach us but that Jesus Christ came forth from his Father on an errand of pure grace?

“Thine hands, dear Jesus, were not arm’d

With an avenging rod,

No hard commission to perform

The vengeance of a God.

But all was mercy, all was mild,

And wrath forsook the throne,

When Christ on his kind errand came

And brought salvation down.”

Let us rejoice that God commendeth his *love* towards us, because in “due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Yet, as if to show that Jesus the Savior is also Jesus the Judge, one gleam of justice must dart forth. Where shall mercy direct its fall? See, my brethren, it glances not upon a man, but lights upon an unconscious, unsuffering thing—a tree. The curse, if we may call it a curse at all, did not fall on man or beast, or even the smallest insect; its bolt falls harmlessly upon a fig tree by the wayside. It bore upon itself the signs of barrenness, and perhaps was no one’s property; little, therefore, was the loss which any man sustained by the withering of that verdant, mockery, while instruction more precious than a thousand acres of fig trees has been left for the benefit of all ages. The only other instance at which I hinted just now was the permission given to the devils to enter into the swine, and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. In that case, again, what a mercy it was that the Savior did not permit a band of men to become the victims of the evil one. It was infinitely better that the whole herd of swine should perish than that one poor man should be rendered a maniac through their influence. The creatures

choked in the abyss were nothing but swine—swine which their Jewish owners had no right to keep; and even then they did not perish through Jesus Christ's agency, but through the malice of the devils, for needs must even swine run when the devil drives.

Observe, then, with attention, this solitary instance of stern judgment wrought by the Savior's hand. Consider seriously that if only once in his whole life Christ works a miracle of pure judgment, the lesson so unique must be very full of meaning. If there be but one curse, where does it fall? What is its symbolic teaching? I do not know that I ever felt more solemnly the need of true fruitfulness before God than when I was looking over this miracle—parable—for such it may justly be called. The curse, you at once perceive, falls in its metaphorical and spiritual meaning upon those high professors who are destitute of true holiness; upon those who manifest great show of leaves, but who bring forth no fruit unto God. Only one thunderbolt, and that for boasting pretenders; only one curse, and that for hypocrites. O blessed Spirit, write this heart-searching truth upon our hearts!

I. We will commence our exposition with the remark that **THERE WERE MANY TREES WITH LEAVES ONLY UPON THEM, AND YET NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED BY THE SAVIOR, SAVE ONLY THIS FIG TREE.** It is the nature of many trees to yield to man nothing but their shade. The hungering Savior did not resort to the oak or to the elm to look for food, nor could the fir tree, nor the pine, nor the box, offer him any hope of refreshment; nor did he breathe one hard word concerning them, for he knew what was in them, and that they neither were, nor pretended to be fruit-bearing trees. So, dear friends, there are many men whose lives bear leaves, but no fruit—and yet, thanks be unto God, almighty patience bears with them. They are allowed to live out their time, and then it is true they are cut down and cast into the fire; but while they are permitted to stand, no curse withers them: the longsuffering of God waiteth to be gracious to them. Here are some of the characters who have leaves but no fruit.

There are thousands who ignorantly follow *the sign and know nothing of the substance*. In England, we think ourselves far in advance of Popish countries; but how much of the essence of Popery peeps out in the worship of very many! They go to Church or chapel, and they think that the mere going into the place and sitting a certain time and coming out again is an acceptable act to God: mere formality, you see, is mistaken for spiritual worship! They are careful to have their infants sprinkled, but what the ceremony means they know not; and without looking into the Bible to see whether the Lord commands any such an ordinance, they offer him their ignorant will—worship either in obedience to custom, or in the superstition of ignorance. What the thing is, or why it is, they do not enquire, but go through a performance as certain parrots say their prayers. They know nothing about the inward and spiritual grace, which the Catechism talks about, if indeed, inward spiritual grace could ever be connected with an unscriptural outward and visible sign. When these poor souls come to the Lord's Supper, their thoughts go no farther than the bread and wine, or the hands which break the one and pour out the other; they know nothing whatever of communion with Jesus, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood; their souls have proceeded as far as the shell, but they have never broken into the kernel to taste the sweetness thereof. They have a name to live and are dead; their religion is a mere show; a signboard without an inn a well-set table without meat; a pretty pageant where nothing is gold, but everything gilt nothing real, but all pasteboard, paint, plaster, and pretense. Nonconformists, your chapels swarm with such, and the houses of the Establishment are full of the same! Multitudes live and die satisfied with the outward trappings of religion, and are utter strangers to internal vital godliness. Yet such persons are not cursed in this

life! No, they are to be pitied, to be prayed for, to be sought after, with words of love and honest truth; they are to be hoped for yet, for who knoweth but that God may call them to repentance, and they may yet receive the life of God into their souls?

Another very numerous class have *opinion but not faith*, creed but not credence. We meet them everywhere. How zealous they are for Protestantism! They would not only die for orthodoxy, but kill others as well. Perhaps it is the Calvinistic doctrine which they have received, and then the five points are as dear to them as their five senses. These men will contend, not to say earnestly, but savagely for the faith. They very vehemently denounce all those who differ from them in the smallest degree; and deal damnation round the land with amazing liberality to all who are not full weight according to the balance of their little Zoar, Rehoboth, or Jireh: while all the while the spirit of Christ, the love of the Spirit, bowels of compassion, and holiness of character are no more to be expected from them than grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. Doctrine, my brethren, is to be prized above all price! Woe to the Church of God when error shall be thought a trifle, for truth be lightly esteemed; and when truth is gone, what is left? But, at the same time, we grossly mistake if we think that orthodoxy of creed will save us. I am sick of those cries of “the truth,” “the truth,” “the truth,” from men of rotten lives and unholy tempers. There is an orthodox as well as a heterodox road to hell, and the devil knows how to handle Calvinists quite as well as Arminians. No pale of any Church can insure salvation, no form of doctrine can guarantee to us eternal life. “Ye must be born again.” Ye must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. “Every tree which bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Stopping short of vital union to the Lord Jesus by real faith, we miss the great qualification for entering heaven. Yet the time is not come when these mere head-knowers are cursed. These trees have leaves only, but no fatal curse has withered them hopelessly. No; they are to be sought after; they may yet know the Lord in their hearts, and the Holy Spirit may yet make them humble followers of the Lamb. O that it may be so!

A third class have *talk without feeling*. Mr. Talkative, in “Pilgrim’s Progress,” is the representative of a very numerous host. They speak very glibly concerning divine things. Whether the topic be doctrinal, experimental, or practical, they talk fluently upon everything. But evidently, the whole thing comes from the throat and the lip; there is no welling up from the heart. If the thing came from the heart it would be boiling, but now it hangs like an icicle from their lips. You know them—you may learn something from them, but all time while you are yourself aware that if they bless others by their words, they themselves remain unblessed. Ah! let us be very anxious lest this should be our own case. Let the preacher feel the anxiety of the apostle Paul, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway; and let my hearers feel the same concern, lest, after talking about the timings of God, they should prove to be mere lip-servers, and not accepted children of the Most High.

Another tribe springs up just now before my eye—those who have *regrets without repentance*. Many of you under a heart-searching sermon feel grieved on account of your sins, and yet never have the strength of mind to give them up. You say you are sorry, but yet go on in the same course. You do really feel, when death and judgment press upon you, a certain sort of regret that you could have been so foolish, but the next day the strength of temptation is such, that you fall a prey to the very same infatuation. It is easy to bring a man to the river of regret, but you cannot make him drink the water of repentance. If Agag would be killed with words, no Amalekite would live. If men’s transient sorrows for sin were real repentance on account of it, there is not a man living who

would not, sometime or other, have been a true penitent. Here, however, are leaves only, and no fruit.

We have yet again, another class of persons who have *resolves without action*. They *will!* Ah! that they *will!* but it is always in the future tense. They are hearers, and they are even feelers, but they are not *doers* of the Word: it never comes to that. They would be free, but they have not patience to file their fetters, nor grace to submit their manacles to the hammer. They see the right, but they permit the wrong to rule them. They are charmed with the beauties of holiness, and yet deluded with the wantonness of sin. They would run in the ways of God's commandments, but the road is too rough, and running is weary work. They would fight for God, but victory is hardly won, and so they turn back almost as soon as they have set out; they put their hand to the plough, and then prove utterly unworthy of the kingdom.

The great majority of persons who have any sort of religion at all, bear heaves, but they produce no fruit. I know there are some such here, and I solemnly warn you, though no curse falls upon you, though we do not think that the miracle now under consideration has any relation to you whatever, yet remember, there is nothing to be done with trees which bring forth only leaves, but in due time to use the axe upon them, and to cast them into the fire: and *this must be your doom*. As sure as you live under the sound of the gospel, and yet are not converted by it, so surely will you be cast into outer darkness. As certainly as Jesus Christ invites you, and ye will not come, so certainly will he send his angels to gather the dead branches together, and you among them, to cast them into the fire. Beware! beware! thou fruitless tree! thou shalt not stand for ever! Mercy waters thee with her tears now; God's lovingkindness digs about thee still; still the husbandman comes, seeking fruit upon thee year after year. Beware! the edge of the axe is sharp, and the arm which wields it is nothing less than almighty. Beware! lest thou fall into the fire!

II. Secondly, THERE WERE OTHER TREES WITH NEITHER LEAVES NOR FRUIT, AND NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED!

The time of figs was not yet come. Now, as the fig tree either brings forth the fig before the leaf, or else produces figs and leaves at the same time, the major part of the trees, perhaps all of them, without exception of this one, were entirely without figs and without leaves, and yet Jesus did not curse any one of them, for the time of figs was not yet come.

What multitudes are destitute of anything like religion; they make no profession of it; they not only have no fruits of godliness, but they have no leaves even of outward respect to it; they do not frequent the court of the Lord's house; they use no form of prayer; they never attend upon ordinances. The great outlying mass of this huge city—how does religion affect it? It is a very sad thing to think that there are people living in total darkness next door to the light; that you may find in the very street where the gospel is preached, persons who have never heard a sermon. Are there not, throughout this city, tens and hundreds of thousands who know not their right hand from their left, in matters of godliness? Their children go to Sabbath schools, but they themselves spend the whole Sabbath day in anything except the worship of God! In our country parishes, very often neither the religion of the Establishment nor of Dissent, at all affects the population. Take, for instance, that village which will be disgracefully remembem'ed as long as Essex endures, the village of Hedingham. There are in that place not only parish Churches, but Dissenting meetinghouses, and yet the persons who foully murdered the poor wretch supposed to be a wizard, must have been as ignorant and indifferent to common sense, let alone religion, as even Hottentots or Kaffirs, to whom the light of religion has never come. Why was this? Is it not because there is not enough of missionary

spirit among Christian people to seek out those who are in the lowest strata of society, so that multitudes escape without ever coming into contact with godliness at all? In London, the City Missionaries will bear witness that while they can sometimes get at the wives, yet there are thousands of husbands who are necessarily away at the time of the missionary's visit, who have not a word of rebuke, or exhortation, or invitation, or encouragement, ever sounding in their ears at all, from the day of their birth to the day of their death; and they might, for all practical purposes, as well have been born in the center of Africa as in the city of London, for they are without God, without hope, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, far oft; not by wicked works only, but by dense ignorance of God.

These persons we may divide into two classes, upon neither of whom does the withering curse fall in this life. The first we look upon with hope. Although we see neither leaves nor fruit, we know that "*the time of figs is not yet.*" They are God's *elect*, but they are *not called*. Their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, and were there from before the foundations of the world; though they be dead in trespasses, they are the objects of divine love, and *they must*, in due time, be called by irresistible grace, and turned from darkness to light. "The Lord hath much people in this city," and this should be the encouragement of every one of you, to try to do good, that God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken, an elect people who *must* be saved. When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls, and they must receive it, for so the decree of predestination runs; they must be called in the fullness of time to be the brethren of Christ and children of the Most High. They are *redeemed*, beloved friends, but not *regenerated*—as much redeemed with precious blood as the saints before the eternal throne. They are Christ's property, and yet perhaps, they are waiting around the ale-house at this very moment until the door shall open—bought with Jesus' precious blood, and yet spending their nights in a brothel, and their days in sin; but if Jesus Christ purchased them he will have them. If he counted down the precious drops, God is not unfaithful to forget the price which his Son has paid. He will not suffer his substitution to be in any case an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet, but regenerated they must be; and this is your comfort and mine, when we go out with the quickening Word of God. Nay, more, these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. "Neither pray I for these alone," saith the great Intercessor, "but for *them also which shall believe* on me through their word." They do not pray for themselves; poor, ignorant souls, they do not know anything about prayer; but Jesus prays for them. Their names are on his breast, and ere long they must bow their stubborn knee, breathing the penitential sigh before the throne of grace. "The time of figs *is not yet.*" The predestinated moment has not struck; but, when it comes, *they shall*, for God will have his own; they must, for the Spirit is not to be withstood when he cometh forth with power—*they must* become the willing servants of the living God. "My people shall be willing in the day of my power." "He shall justify many." "He shall see of the travail of his soul." "He shall divide a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."

No curse falls upon these; they deserve it, but eternal love prevents it. Their sins write it, but the finished sacrifice blots it out. They may well perish because they seek not mercy, but Christ intercedes for them, and live they shall.

Alas! however, among those who have neither leaves nor fruit, there is another class which *never* bring forth either the one or the other; they live in sin and die in ignorance, perishing without hope. As these leave the world, can they upbraid us for neglecting them? Are we clear of their

blood? May not the blood of many of them cry from the ground against us? As they are condemned on account of sins, may they not accuse us because we did not take the gospel to them, but left them where they were? Dread thought! but let it not be shaken off, there are tens of thousands every day who pass into the world of spirits unsaved, and inherit the righteous wrath of God. Yet in this life, you see, no special curse falls upon them, and this miracle has no special bearing upon them; it bears upon a totally different class of people, of whom we will now speak.

III. WE HAVE BEFORE US A SPECIAL CASE.

I have already said, that in a fig tree, the fruit takes the precedence of the leaves, or the leaves and the fruit come at the same time; so that it is laid down as a general rule, that if there be leaves upon a fig tree, you may rightly expect to find fruit upon it.

To begin then with the explanation of this special case, *in a fig tree fruit comes before leaves*. So in a true Christian, fruit always takes the precedence of profession. Find a man anywhere who is a true servant of God, and before he united himself with the Church, or attempted to engage in public prayer, or to identify himself with the people of God, he searched to see whether he had real repentance on account of sin—he desired to know whether he had a sincere and genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he perhaps tarried some little time to try himself to see whether there were the fruits of holiness in his daily life. Indeed, I may say that there are some who wait too long; they are so afraid lest they should make a profession before they have grace in possession, that they will wait year after year—too long—become unwise, and make what was a virtue become a vice. Still this is the rule with Christians: they first give themselves to the Lord and afterwards to the Lord's people according to his will. You who are the servants of God—do you not scorn to vaunt yourselves beyond your line and measure? Would you not think it disgraceful on your part to profess anything which you have not felt? Do you not feel a holy jealousy when you are teaching others, lest you should teach more than God has taught you? and are you not afraid even in your prayers lest you should use expressions which are beyond your own depth of meaning? I am sure the true Christian is always afraid of anything like having the leaves before he has the fruit.

Another remark follows from this—*where we see the leaves we have a right to expect the fruit*. When I see a man a Church-member, when I hear him engage in prayer, I expect to see in him, holiness, the character and the image of Christ. I have a right to expect it, because the man has solemnly avowed that he is the partaker of divine grace. You cannot join a Church without taking upon yourselves very solemn responsibilities. What do you desire when you come to see us, and ask to be admitted into fellowship? You tell us that you have passed from death unto life, that you have been born again, that there has been a change in you, the hike of which you never knew before, one which only God could have wrought. You tell us you are in the habit of private prayer; that you have a desire for the conversion of others. If you did not so profess, we dare not receive you. Well now, having made these professions, it would be insincere on our part if we did not expect to see your characters holy, and your conversation correct; we have a right to expect it from your own professions. We have a right to expect it from the work of the Spirit which you claim to have received. Shall the Holy Spirit work in man's heart to produce a trifle? Do you think that the Spirit of God would have written us this Book, and that Jesus Christ would have shed his precious blood to produce a hypocrite? Is an inconsistent Christian the highest work of God? I suppose God's plan of salvation to be that which has more exercised his thoughts and wisdom than the making of all worlds and the sustenance of all providence; and shall this best, this highest, this darling work of God, produce no more than that poor, mean, talking, unacting, fruitless deceiver? Ye have no love

for souls, no care for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and yet think that the Spirit, has made you what you are! No zeal, no melting bowels of compassion, no cries of earnest entreaty, no wrestling with God, no holiness, no self-denial, and yet say that you are a vessel made by the Master and fitted for his use! How can this be? No; if you profess to be a Christian, from the necessity of the Spirit's work, we have a right to expect fruit from you. Besides, in genuine professors we do get the fruit, we see a faithful attachment to the Redeemer's cause, an endurance to the end, in poverty, in sickness, in shame, in persecution. We see other professors holding fast to the truth, they are not led aside by temptation, neither do they disgrace the cause they have espoused; and, if you profess to be one of the same order, we have a right to look for the same blessed fruits of the Spirit in you, and if we see them not you have belied us.

Observe further that *our Lord hungers for fruit*. A hungry person seeks for something which may satisfy him, for fruit, not leaves! Jesus hungers for your holiness. A strong expression, you will say, but I doubt not of its accuracy. For what were we elected? We were predestinated to be conformed unto the image of God's Son; we were chosen to good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." What is the end of our redemption? Why did Jesus Christ die? "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Why have we been called but that we should be called to be saints? To what end are any of the great operations of the covenant of grace? Do they not all point at our holiness? If you will think of any privilege which the Lord confers upon his people through Christ, you will perceive that they all aim at the sanctification of the chosen people—the making of them to bring forth fruit that God the Father may be glorified in them. O Christian, for this the tears of the Savior! for this the agony and bloody sweat! for this the five death-wounds! for this the burial and the resurrection, that he makes you holy, even perfectly holy like unto himself! And can it be, that when he hungers after fruit, you think nothing of fruit-bearing? O professor, how base art thou, to call thyself a blood-bought child of God, amid yet to live unto thyself! How darest thou, O barren tree, professing to be watered by the bloody sweat, and digged by the griefs and woes of the wounded Savior—how darest thou bring forth leaves and no fruit? Oh! sacrilegious mockery of a hungry Savior! oh! blasphemous tantalizing of a hungry Lord! that thou shouldst profess to have cost him all this, and yet yield him nothing! When I think that Jesus hungers after fruit in me, it stirs me up to do more for him. Does it not have the same effect on you? He hungers for your good works; he hungers to see you useful. Jesus the King of kings, hungers after your prayers—hungers after your anxieties for the souls of others; and nothing ever will satisfy him for the travail of his soul but seeing you wholly devoted to his cause.

This brings us into the very midst and meaning of the miracle. *There are some, then, who make unusual profession, and yet disappoint the Savior in his just expectations. The Jews* did this. When Jesus Christ came it was not the time of figs. The time for great holiness was after the coming of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit. All the other nations were without leaves. Greece, Rome, all these showed no signs of progress; but there was the Jewish nation covered with leaves. They professed already to have obtained the blessings which he came to bring. There stood the Pharisee with his long prayers; there were the lawyers and the Scribes with their deep knowledge of the things of the kingdom. They said they had the light. The time of figs was not come, but yet they had the leaves, though not a single fruit; and you know what a curse fell on Israel; how in the day of Jerusalem's destruction the tree was withered altogether from its root, because it had its leaves, but had no fruit.

The same will be true of any *Church*. There are times when all the Churches seem sunken alike in lethargy—such a time we had, say ten years ago—but one Church, perhaps, seems to be all alive. The congregations are large. Much, apparently, is proposed for the growth of the Savior's kingdom. A deal of noise is made about it; there is much talk, and the people are all expectation; and, if there be no fruit, no real consecration to Christ, if there be no genuine liberality, no earnest vital godliness, no hallowed consistency, other Churches may live on; but such a Church as this, making so high a profession, and being so precocious in the produce of leaves, shall have a curse from God. No man shall eat fruit of it for ever, and it shall wither away.

In the case of *individuals* the moral of our miracle runs thus. Some are looked upon as *young believers*, who early join the Church. "The time of figs is not yet;" it is not a very ordinary case to see children converted, but we do see some, and we are very grateful. We are jealous however lest we should see leaves but not fruit. These juveniles are extraordinary cases; and on that account we look for higher results. When we are disappointed what shall come upon such but a curse upon their precocity, which led them to the deception. Some of us were converted, or profess to have been, when young, and if we have lived hitherto, and all we have produced has been merely words, resolves, professions, but not fruit unto God, we must expect the curse.

Again, *professors eminent in station*. There are necessarily but few ministers, but few Church officers; but when men so distinguish themselves by zeal, or by louder professions than others, as to gain the ear of the Christian public and are placed in responsible positions—if they bring forth no fruit, they are the persons upon whom the curse will light. It may be with other Christians that "the time of figs is not yet;" they have not made the advances which these profess to have made; but having been, upon their own profession, elected to an office which essentially requires fruit, since they yield it not, let them beware.

To those who make professions of much love to Christ, the same caution may be given. With the most of Christians, I am afraid, I must say that "the time of figs is not yet," for we are too much like the Laodicean Church. But you meet with some men—how much they are in love with Christ! How sweetly they can *talk* about him, but what do they *do* for him? Nothing! nothing! Their love lies just in the wind which comes out of their own mouths, and that is all. Now, when the Lord has a curse, he will deal it out on such. They went beyond all others in an untimely declaration of a very fervent love, and now they yield him no fruit. "Yes," said one, "I love God so much, that I do not reckon that anything I have is my own. It is all the Lord's—all the Lord's, and I am his steward." Well, this dear good man, of course, joined the Church, and after a time, some mission work wanted a little help. What was his reply? "When I pay my seat rent, I have done all I intend to do." A man of wealth and means! After a little time, this same man found it inconvenient even to pay for his seat, and goes now to a place not quite so full, where he can get a seat and do nothing to support the ministry! If there is a special thunderbolt anywhere, it is these unctious hypocrites who whine about love to Christ, and bow down at the shrine of mammon.

Or, take another case. You meet with others whose profession is not of so much love, but it is of *much experience*. Oh! what experience they have had! What deep experience! Ah! they know the humblings of heart and the plague of human nature! They know the depths of corruption, and the heights of divine fellowship, and so on. Yes, and if you go into the shop you find the corruption is carried on behind the counter, and the deceit in the day-book; if they do not know the plague of their own hearts, at least they are a plague to their own household. Such people are abhorrent to all men, and much more to God.

Others you meet with *who have a censorious tongue*. What good people they must be; they can see the faults of other people so plainly! This Church is not right, and the other is not right, and yonder preacher—well some people think him a very good man, but they do not. They can see the deficiencies in the various denominations, and they observe that very few really carry out Scripture as it should be carried out. They complain of want of love, and are the very people who create that want. Now if you will watch these very censorious people, the very faults they indicate in others, they are indulging in themselves; and while they are seeking to find out the mote in their brother's eye, they have a beam in their own. These are the people who are indicated by this fig tree, for they ought, according to their own showing, taking them on their own ground, to be better than other people. If what they say be true, they are bright particular stars, and they ought to give special light to the world. They are such that even Jesus Christ himself might expect to receive fruit from them, but they are nothing but deceivers, with these high soarings and proud boastings; they are nothing after all but pretenders. Like Jezebel with her paint, which made her all the uglier, they would seem to be what they are not. As old Adam says, "They are candles with big wicks and no tallow, and when they go out they make a foul and nauseous smell." "They have summer sweating on their brow, and winter freezing in their hearts." You would think them the land of Goshen, but prove them the wilderness of sin. Let us search ourselves, lest such be the case with us.

IV. And now to close, *SUCH A TREE MIGHT WELL BE WITHERED*. *Deception is abhorred of God*. There was the Jewish temple, there were the priests standing in solemn pomp, there were the abundant sacrifices of God's altar. But was God pleased with his temple? No, because in the temple you had all the leaves, you had all the externals of worship, but there was no true prayer, no belief in the great Lamb of God's passover, no truth, no righteousness, no love of men, no care for the glory of God; and so the temple, which had been a house of prayer, had become a den of thieves. You do not marvel that the temple was destroyed. You and I may become just like that temple. We may go on with all the externals of religions, nobody may miss us out of our seat at Tabernacle, nay, we may never miss our Christian engagements; we may be in all external matters more precise than we used to be, and yet for all that, we may have become in our hearts a den of thieves; the heart may be given to the world while external ceremonies are still kept up and maintained. Let us beware of this, for such a place cannot be long without a curse. It is abhorrent to God.

Again, *it is deceptive to man*. Look at that temple! What do men go there for? To see holiness and virtue. Why tread they its hallowed courts? To get nearer to God. And what do they find there? Instead of holiness, covetousness; instead of getting nearer to God, they get into the midst of a mart where men are haggling about the price of doves, and bickering with one another about the changing of shekels. So men may watch to hear some seasonable word from our lips, and instead of that, may get evil; and as that temple was cursed for deluding men, so may we be, because we deceive and disappoint the wants of mankind.

More than this, this barren fig tree *committed sacrilege upon Christ*, did it not? Might it not have exposed him to ridicule? Some might have said, "How goest thou to a tree, thou prophet, whereon there is no fruit?" A false professor exposes Christ to ridicule. As the temple of old dishonored God, so does a Christian when his heart is not right; he does dishonor to God, and makes the holy cause to be trodden under foot of the adversary. Such men indeed have reason to beware.

Once more, this tree might well be cursed, because its bringing forth nothing but leaves was a plain evidence of its sterility. It had force and vitality, but it turned it to ill account, and would

continue to do so. The curse of Christ was but a confirmation of what it already was. He did as good as say, "He that is unfruitful, let him be unfruitful still." And now, what if Christ should come into this Tabernacle this morning, and should look on you and on me, and see in any of us great profession and great pomp of leaves, and yet no fruit, what if he should pronounce the curse on us, what would be the effect? We should wither away as others have done. What mean we by this? Why, they have on a sudden turned to the world. We could not understand why such fair saints should, on a sudden, become such black devils; the fact was, Christ had pronounced the word, and they began to wither away. If he should pronounce the unmasking word on any mere professor here, and say, "Let no man eat fruit of thee for ever," you will go into gross outward sin and wither to your shame. This will take place probably on a sudden; and taking place, your case will be irretrievable; you never afterwards will be restored. The blast which shall fall upon you will be eternal; you will live as a lasting monument of the terrible justice of Christ, as the great head of the Church; you will be spared to let it be seen that a man outside the Church may escape with impunity in this life, but a man inside the Church shall have a present curse, and be made to stand as a tree blasted by the lightning of God for ever. Now, this is a heart-searching matter. It went through me yesterday when I thought, "Well, here am I, I have professed to be called of God to the ministry; I have forced myself into a leading place in God's Church; I have voluntarily put myself into a place where sevenfold damnation is my inevitable inheritance if I be not true and sincere." I could almost wish myself back out of the Church, or at least in the obscurest place in her ranks, to escape the perils and responsibilities of my position; and so may you, if you have not the witness of the Spirit in you that you are born of God—you may wish that you never thought of Christ, and never dreamed of taking his name upon you. If you have by diligence worked yourself into a high position among God's people; if you have mere leaves without the fruit, the more sure is the curse, because the greater the disappointment of the Savior. The more you profess, the more is expected of you; and if you do not yield it, the more just the condemnation when you shall be left to stand for ever withered by the curse of Christ. O men and brethren, let us tremble before the heart-searching eye of God; but let us still remember that grace can make us fruitful yet. The way of mercy is open still. Let us apply to the wounds of Christ this morning. If we have never begun, let us begin now. Now let us throw our arms about the Savior, and take him to be ours; and, having done this, let us seek divine grace, that for the rest of our lives we may work for God. Oh! I do hope to do more for God, and I hope you will. O Holy Spirit, work in us mightily, for in thee is our fruit found! Amen.

The Sinner's Friend

A Sermon

(No. 556)

By the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“A friend of publicans and sinners.”—Matthew 11:19.

MANY A TRUE WORD is spoken in jest, and many a tribute to virtue has been unwittingly paid by the sinister lips of malice. The enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ thought to brand him with infamy, hold him up to derision, and hand his name down to everlasting scorn, as “a friend of publicans and sinners.” Short-sighted mortals! Their scandal published his reputation. To this day the Savior is adored by the title which was minted as a slur. It was designed to be a stigma, that every good man would shudder at and shrink from; it has proved to be a fascination which wins the heart, and enchants the soul of all the godly. Saints in heaven, and saints on earth delight to sing of him thus—

“Savior of sinners they proclaim,
Sinners of whom the chief I am.”

What the invidious Jews said in bitter spleen, has been turned by the Holy Spirit to the most gracious account. Where they poured out vials of hate, odours of sacred incense arise. Troubled consciences have found a sweet balm in the very sound. Jesus, “the friend of publicans and sinners,” has proved himself friendly to them, and they have become friends with him; so completely has he justified the very name which his enemies gave him in ribald affront.

We shall take this title of Jesus to-night as an order of distinction which sets forth his excellency, and as God helps us, we shall try to exalt his name and proclaim his fame, while we attempt to *explain how he was the friend of sinners; and how he shows that he is still the same.*

I. OUR LORD PROVED HIMSELF IN HIS OWN TIME TO BE THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

What better proof could he give of it than coming from the majesty of his Father's house to the meanness of Bethlehem's manger? What better proof could he give than leaving the society of cherubim and seraphim, to lie in the manger where the horned oxen fed, and to become the associate of fallen men? The incarnation of the Savior in the very form of sinners, taking upon himself the flesh of sinners, being born of a sinner, having a sinner for his reputed father—his very being a man, which is tantamount to being in the same form with sinners—surely this were enough to prove that he is the sinner's friend.

When you take up the roll of his earthly lineage and begin to read it through, you will be struck with the fact that there are but few women mentioned in it; and yet three out of those mentioned were harlots, so that even in his lineage there was the taint of sin, and a sinner's blood would have run in his veins if he had been the true son of Joseph; but inasmuch as he was begotten by the Holy Ghost, who overshadowed the Virgin, in him was no sin; yet his reputed pedigree ran through the veins of sinners. Tamar, and Rahab, and Bath-sheba are three names which bring to remembrance deeds of shame, and yet these stand in the records as the ancestors of the Son of Mary, the sinner's friend!

As soon as Jesus Christ, being born in the likeness of sinful flesh, has come to years of maturity, and has commenced his real life-work, he at once discloses his friendship for sinners by associating with them. You do not find him standing at a distance, issuing his mandates and his orders to sinners to make themselves better, but you find him coming among them like a good workman who stands over his work; he takes his place where the sin and the iniquity are, and he personally comes to deal with it. He does not write out a prescription and send by another hand his medicines with which to heal the sickness of sin, but he comes right into the lazar-house, touches the wounded, looks at the sick; and there is healing in the touch; there is life in the look. The great Physician took upon himself our sicknesses and bare our infirmities, and so proved himself to be really the sinner's friend. Some people appear to like to have a philanthropic love towards the fallen, but yet they would not touch them with a pair of tongs. They would lift them up if they could, but it must be by some machinery—some sort of contrivance by which they would not degrade themselves or contaminate their own hands. Not so the Savior. Up to the very elbow he seems to thrust that gracious arm of his into the mire, to pull up the lost one out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. He takes himself the mattock and the spade, and goes to work in the great quarry that he may get out the rough stones which afterwards he will himself polish with his own bitter tears and bloody sweat, that he may make them fit to shine for ever in the glorious temple of the Lord his God. He comes himself into direct, personal contact with sin, without being contaminated with it. He comes as close to it as a man can come. He eats and drinks with sinners. He sits at the Pharisee's table one day, and does not rise because there is a crowd of people no better than they should be coming near him. Another day he goes to the publican's house, and the publican had, no doubt, been a great extortioner in his time; but Jesus sits there, and that day does salvation come to that publican's house. Beloved, this is a sweet trait about Christ, and proves how real and how true was his love, that he made his associations with sinners, and did not shun even the chief of them.

Nay, he not only came among them, but he was always seeking their good by his ministry. If there was anywhere a sinner, a lost sheep of the house of Israel, Christ was after that sinner. Never such an indefatigable shepherd; he sought that which was lost till he found it. One of his earliest works of mercy we will tell you of in brief. He was once on a journey, and Samaria was a little out of his way; but there lived in a city of that country a woman—ah! the less said of her the better. She had had five husbands, and he whom she then had was not her husband, nor were any of the others either. She was a disgrace to that city of Samaria. But Jesus, who has a keen eye for sinners, and a heart which beats high for them, means to save that woman, and he must and he will have her. Being weary, he sits down on a well to rest. A special providence brings the woman to the well. The conventionalities of society forbid him to talk with her. But he breaks through the narrow bigotry of caste. A Samaritan by birth, he cares not for that; but will that most holy being condescend to have familiar conversation with her—a dishonor to her sex? He will. His disciples may marvel when they come back and find him talking with her, but he will do it. He begins to open up the Word of life to her understanding, and that woman becomes the first Christian missionary we ever hear of, for she ran back to the city, leaving her water-pot, and crying, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" And they came and believed; and there was great joy in that city of Samaria. You know, too, that there was another sinner. He was a bad fellow—I fear him. He had been constantly grinding the faces of the poor, and getting more out of them by way of taxation than he should have done; but the little man had the bump of curiosity, and he must needs see the preacher, and the preacher must needs love him; for I say there was a

wonderful attraction in Jesus to a sinner. That sinner's heart was like a piece of iron: Christ's heart was like a loadstone; and wherever there was a sinner the loadstone began to feel it, and soon the sinner began to feel the loadstone too. "Azaccheus," said Christ, "make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house;" and down comes the sinner, and salvation has come to his house at that hour, Oh! Christ never seemed to preach so sweetly as when he was preaching a sinner's sermon. I would have loved to have seen that dear face of his when he cried, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" or, better still, to have seen his eyes running with whole showers of tears when he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not even!" or to have heard him preach those three great sermons upon sinners when he described the woman as sweeping the house and taking away the dust, that she might find the lost piece of her money; and the shepherd going from hill to hill after the wandering sheep; and the father running to welcome that rag-clad prodigal; kissing him with the kisses of love, clothing him with the best robe, and inviting him into the feast, while they did dance and make merry because the lost was found, and he who was dead was alive again. Why, he was the mightiest of preachers for sinners, beyond a doubt, Oh! how he loved them! Never mind the Pharisees: he has thunderbolts for them. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees!" But when publicans and harlots come, he always has the gate of mercy ajar for them. For them he always has some tender word, some loving saying, such as this—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" or such like words of tender wooing. The very chief of sinners was thus drawn into the circle of his disciples.

And you know, dear friends, he did not prove his love merely by preaching to them, and living with them, and by his patience in enduring their contradiction against himself, and all their evil words and deeds, but he proved it by his prayers too. He used his mighty influence with the Father in their behalf. He took their polluted names on his holy lips; he was not ashamed to call them brethren. Their cause became his own, and in their interest his pulse throbbed. How many times on the cold mountains he kept his heart warm with love to them! How often the sweat rolled down his face when he was in an agony of spirit for them I cannot tell you. This much I do know, that on that self-same night when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, he prayed this prayer—after having prayed for his saints, he went on to say—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Here, truly, the heart of the Savior was bubbling up and welling over towards sinners. And you never can forget that almost his last words were, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Though wilfully and wickedly they pierced his hands and his feet, yet were there no angry words, but only that short, loving, hearty prayer—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Ah! friends, if there ever was a man who was a friend to others, Jesus was a friend to sinners his whole life through.

This, however, is but little. As for the river of the Savior's love to sinners, I have only brought you to its banks. You have but stood on the bank and dipped your feet in the flood; but now prepare to swim. So fond was he of sinners that he made his grave with the wicked. He was numbered with the transgressors. God's fiery sword was drawn to smite a world of sinners down to hell. It must fall on those sinners. But Christ loves them. His prayers stay the arm of God a little while, but still the sword must fall in due time. What is to be done? By what means can they be rescued? Swifter than the lightning's flash I see that sword descending. But what is that in vision I behold? It falls—but where? Not on the neck of sinners; it is not their neck which is broken by its cruel edge; it is not

their heart which bleeds beneath its awful force. No; the “friend of sinners” has put himself into the sinner’s place! and then, as if he had been the sinner, though in him was no sin, he suffers, bleeds, and dies—no common suffering—no ordinary bleeding—no death such as mortals know. It was a death in which the second death was comprehended; a bleeding in which the very veins of God were emptied. The God-man divinely suffered. I know not how else to express the suffering. It was a more than mortal agony, for the divine strengthened the human, and the man was made vast and mighty to endure through his being a God. Being God and man he endured more than ten thousand millions of men all put together could have suffered. He endured, indeed, the hells of all for whom he died, the torments, or the equivalent for the torments, which all of them ought to have suffered—the eternal wrath of God condensed and put into a cup, too bitter for mortal tongue to know, and then drained to its utmost dregs by the loving lips of Jesus. Beloved, this was love. “Herein is love, that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” This Christ has done, and he is, therefore demonstrated to be the friend of sinners.

But the trial is over; the struggle is passed; the Savior is dead and buried; he rises again, and after he has spent forty days on earth—in that forty days proving still his love for sinners—he rose again for their justification; I see him ascending up on high. Angels attend him as the clouds receive him.

“They bring his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne;
Clap their triumphant wings and cry,
'The glorious work is done.'”

What pomp! What a procession! What splendor! He will forget his poor friends the sinners now, will he not? Not he! I think I hear the song, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in.” The bars of massy light are all unloosed; the pearly gates are all wide open flung; and as he passes through, mark you, the highest joy which swells his soul is that he has opened those gates, not for himself, for they were never shut on him, but that he has opened them for sinners. It was for this, indeed, he died; and it is for this that he ascends on high, that he may “open the kingdom of heaven for all believers.” See him as he rides through heaven’s streets! “Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts of men.” Ah! but hear the refrain, for this is the sweetest note of all the hymn, “Yea, for the rebellious also—yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” The scattered gifts of his coronation, the lavish bounties of his ascension, are still for sinners. He is exalted on high—for what? To give repentance and remission of sins. He still wears upon his breastplate the names of sinners; upon his hands and upon his heart does he still bear the remembrance of those sinners; and every day for the sinner’s sake he doth not hold his peace, and for the sinner’s sake he doth not rest, but cries unto God until every sinner shall be brought safely home. Every sinner who believeth, every sinner who was given to him, every sinner whom he bought with blood—he will not rest, I say, till all such are gathered to be the jewels of his crown, world without end.

Methinks we cannot say more; and I think you will say we could not have said less concerning the way in which the Savior proved himself to be the sinner’s friend. If there are any of you who dare to doubt him after this, I know not what further to advance. If there can be one who has proved himself your friend, surely Jesus did it, and he is willing to receive you now. What he has done he

still continues to do. O that you might have grace to perceive that Jesus is the lover of your soul, that you might find the blessedness which all these tokens of friendship, of which we have been speaking, have brought for believing sinners.

II. While we change the subject a little, we shall still keep to the text, and notice **WHAT CHRIST IS DOING NOW FOR SINNERS.**

There is a deep principle involved here—a principle the Pharisee of old could not understand, and the cold heart of humanity is slow to embrace it to-day. I have two explanations to offer of the way in which Jesus personally discovers himself to be the friend of sinners, and I will just mention these before I come to the application of the subject I intend. Once upon a time a woman was brought to Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees: she was an adulteress, she had been taken in the very act. They tell “the sinners friend” what sentence Moses would pronounce in such a case, and they ask him, how sayest thou? This they said tempting him. They were not much concerned about the unhappy creature; the accusation they were intent to lay was against the Man of Nazareth. You know how he disposed of the case, and put her accusers out of countenance. He did not bring the sinner up before the magistrate; nay, he would not act the judge’s part, and pronounce sentence, rather would he act the neighbor’s part; he acquitted himself as a friend. There is a proverb among a certain class of hard-dealing tradesmen, “We know no friendship in business;” and full well they carry it out, while they grind the faces of the poor without pity, and strive to over-reach one another without fairness. And there was in like manner no friendship, no mercy whatever, among those gentlemen of the long robe. Righteousness, to their idea, stood in exacting justice with rigid severity; and as for wickedness, it was only shameful when it was found out. She who was taken in the act must be stoned. They who had done it secretly must prosecute. The real friendship of Jesus appears in his singling out the object of pity; and where they accused him of winking at crime and harbouring the criminal, he was truly laying the axe at the root of the tree, and sheltering the victims while he upbraided the arrogant rulers, whose secret vices were the genuine cause of the wretchedness which had fallen upon the dregs of the nation. I commend this thought to your consideration. When it is said of him, he is a “friend of publicans and sinners,” it was implied that he was not a friend of Scribes and Pharisees. Yet again, I want you to notice that the office which Christ came to fulfill towards sinners was that of pure, unmingled friendship. Let us give you an illustration. There is an awful story abroad: a murder has been committed; and the poor wretch who committed it has cut his own throat. The policeman and the surgeon are quickly on the spot. The one comes there in the interest of law, the other attends in the interest of humanity. Says the officer of police, “Man, you are my prisoner;” says the doctor, “My dear fellow, you are my patient.” And now he lays a delicate hand upon the wound, he stanches the blood, applies soft liniments, binds it up with plasters, and, bending down his ear, listens to the man’s breathing: taking hold of his hand, he feels his pulse: gently raising his head, he administers to him some wine or stimulant, takes him to the hospital, gives the nurse instructions to watch him, and orders that he shall be given nutritious diet as he is able to bear it. Day after day he still visits him, and uses all his skill and all his diligence to heal the man’s Wounds. Is that the way to deal with criminals? Certainly it is not the manner in which the police deal. Their business is to find out all the traces and evidences of his guilt. But the medical attendant is not concerned with the man as an evil doer, but as a sufferer. So is it with the sinner. Moses is the officer of justice who comes to arrest him. Christ is the good Physician who comes to heal him; he says, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself but in me is thy help.” He deals with the disease, with the wounds, with the sufferings of sinners. He is therefore their friend. Of course

the parallel will only go a little way. In the instance of the murderer, the surgeon would hand his patient over to the officers as soon as his wound was recovered; but in the conduct of our Savior he redeems the soul from under the law, and delivers it from the penalty of sin, as well as restores it from the self-inflicted injuries. But oh! if I could but show thee that Christ treats the sinner with pity, rather than with indignation; that the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them; that his visit to our world was mediatorial, not to condemn the world, but to give his life a ransom for many; surely, then, thou wouldst see reason enough why the sinner should look to him as a friend indeed.

Ah! then; I would go further. I would entreat thee to make the case thine own. Thou art a sinner; can I not convince thee that he is thy friend?

You were sick the other day. The physician looked very grave, and whispered something to your wife. She did not tell you what it was, but your own life trembled in the scale, and it is a wonder you are here to-night. Shall I tell you why you are here? Do you see that tree yonder? It has been standing in its place for many years, but it has never yielded any fruit, and several times the master of the garden has said, "Cut it down." The other day the woodman came with his axe; he felt its edge, it was sharp and keen enough, and he began to cut, and the chips were flying, and he made a deep gash. But the gardener came by, one who had watched over the tree, and had hope of it even yet, and he said, "Spare it—spare it yet a little longer; the wound thou hast made may heal; and I will dig about it, and dung it, and if it bring forth fruit well; spare it another year, and if not then cut it down." That tree is yourself. The woodman is Death. That chipping at the trunk of the tree was your sickness. Jesus is he who spared you. You had not been here to-night—you had been there in hell among damned spirits, howling in unutterable woe, if it had not been that the friend of sinners had spared your life.

And where are you to-night? Perhaps, my hearers, you are in an unusual place for you. Your Sunday evenings are not often spent in the house of God. There are other places which know you, but your seat there is empty to-night. There has been much persuasion to bring you here, and it may be that you have come against your will; but some friend has asked you to conduct him to the spot, and here you are. Do you know why you are here? It is a friendly providence, managed by the sinner's friend which has brought you here, that you may hear the sound of mercy, and have a loving invitation tendered to you. Be grateful to the Savior that he has brought you to the gospel-pool. May you—O, may you this night be made to step in and be washed from sin! But it is kind of him, and proves how true a friend he is of sinners, that he has brought you here. I will leave you now where you are, and I will tell you how he has dealt with other sinners, for mayhap this may lead you to ask him to deal the same with you.

I know a sinner—while I live I must know him. Full well do I remember him when he was hard of heart and an enemy to God by a multitude of wicked works. But this friend of sinners loved him; and passing by one day, he looked right into his soul with such a look, that his hard heart began to break. There were deep throes as though a birth of a divine sort were coming on. There was an agony, and there was a grief unutterable; and that poor soul did not think it kind of Jesus; but, indeed, it was kindness too intense ever fully to estimate, for there is no saving a soul except by making it feel its need of being saved. There must be in the work of grace an emptying and a pulling down before there can be a filling and a building up. That soul knew no peace for many a year, and the sole of its foot had no rest; but one day

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,

Come unto me and rest;
 Lay down, thou weary one, lay down,
 Thy head upon my breast.
 I came to Jesus as I was,
 Weary, and worn, and sad,
 I found in him a resting-place,
 And he has made me glad!
 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 Behold, I freely give
 The living water, thirsty one,
 Stoop down, and drink, and live.
 I came to Jesus and I drank
 Of that life-giving stream;
 My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
 And now I live in him.
 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 I am this dark world's light,
 Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
 And all thy days be bright.
 I look'd to Jesus and I found
 In him my star, my sun
 And in that light of light I'll walk,
 Till travelling days are done."

Ay, said I, Christ is the friend of sinners! So say I, and so will I say while this poor lisp-
 ing stammering tongue can articulate a sound. And methinks God had a design of abundant mercy
 when he saved my soul. I had not then believed it, though a mother's loving accents might have
 whispered it in my ears. But he seems to remind me of it over and over again, till love and terror
 mingle in my breast, saying, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." O my blessed Master, thou
 dost trust my lips when thou dost bear witness to my heart. Thou givest charge to my tongue when
 thou constrained my soul. "Am I a chosen vessel?" It is to bear his name to sinners. As a full bottle
 seeks vent, so must my testimony pant for utterance. O sinner, if thou trustest him, he will be such
 a friend to thee; and if thou hast now a broken heart and a contrite spirit, these are his work; and it
 is a proof of his great love to thee if he has made thee to hunger and thirst after him.

Let me impress upon you that Jesus is the friend of the friendless. She who had spent all her
 money on physicians without getting relief, obtained a cure *gratis* when she came to him. He who
 bath "nothing to pay" gets all his debts cancelled by this friend. And he who was ready to perish
 with hunger, finds not only a passing meal, but a constant supply at his hands.

We know of a place in England still existing, where there is a dole of bread served to every
 passer-by who chooses to ask for it. Whoever he may be he has but to knock at the door of St. Cross
 Hospital, and there is the dole of bread for him. Jesus Christ so loveth sinners that he has built a
 St. Cross Hospital, so that, whenever a sinner is hungry, he has but to knock and have his wants
 supplied. Nay, he has done better; he has attached to this hospital of the cross a bath; and whenever
 a soul is black and filthy it has but to go there and be washed. The fountain is always full, always
 efficacious. There is no sinner who ever went into it and found it, could not wash away his stains.

Sins which were scarlet and crimson have all disappeared, and the sinner has been whiter than snow. As if this were not enough, there is attached to this hospital of the cross a wardrobe, and a sinner, making application simply as a sinner, with nothing in his hand, but being just empty and naked, he may come and be clothed from head to foot. And if he wishes to be a soldier, he may not merely have an under garment, but he may have armor which shall cover him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Nay, if he wants a sword he shall have that given to him, and a shield too. There is nothing that his heart can desire that is good for him which he shall not receive. He shall have spending-money so long as he lives, and he shall have an eternal heritage of glorious treasure when he enters into the joy of his Lord.

Beloved, I cannot tell you all that Christ has done for sinners, but this I know, that if he meets with you to-night, and becomes your friend, he will stand by you to the last. He will go home with you to-night. No matter how many pairs of stairs you have to go up, Jesus will go with you. No matter if there be no chair to sit down on, he will not disdain you. You shall be hard at work to-morrow, but as you wipe the sweat from your brow he shall stand by you. You will, perhaps, be despised for his sake, but he will not forsake you. You will, perhaps, have days of sickness, but he will come and make your bed in your sickness for you. You will, perhaps, be poor, but your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure, for he will provide for you. You will vex him much and grieve his Spirit. You will often doubt him—you will go after other lovers. You will provoke him to jealousy, but he will never cease to love you. You will, perhaps, grow cold to him, and even forget his dear name for a time, but he will never forget you. You may, perhaps, dishonour his cross, and damage his fair fame among the sons of men, but he will never cease to love you; nay, he will never love you less—he cannot love you more. This night he doth espouse himself unto you. Faith shall be the wedding-ring which he will put upon your finger. He plights his troth to you,

“Though you should him oft-times forget
His lovingkindness fast is set.”

His heart shall be so true to you that he will never leave you nor forsake you. You will come to die soon, but the friend of sinners, who loved you as a sinner and would not cast you off when your sinnership kept breaking up, will still be with you when you come to the sinner's doom, which is to die. I see you going down the shelving banks of Jordan, but the sinner's friend goes with you. Ah! dear heart, he will put his arm beneath you, and bid you fear not; and when in the thick shades of that grim night you expect to see a fearful visage—the grim face of Death—you shall see instead thereof, you shall see his sweet and smiling face, bright as an evening star, by your soul, and you shall hear him say, “Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed; I am thy God.” You will land in the world of spirits by-and-by; but will the sinner's friend forsake you then? No; he will be pleased to own you; he will meet you on the other side the Jordan, and he will say, “Come, my beloved, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and have bought thee, though thou wast a sinner vile, and now I am not ashamed to confess thee before my holy angels; nay, come with me, and I will take thee to my Father's face, and will confess thee there.” And when the day shall come in which the world shall be judged, he will be thy friend then. Thou shalt sit on the bench with him. At the right hand of the Judge shalt thou stand, accepted in him who was thine Advocate, and who is now thy Judge, to acquit thee. And when the splendours of the millennium shall come, thou shalt partake of them; and when the end shall be, and the world shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, and these arching skies shall have passed away like a forgotten dream; when eternity, with its

deep-sounding waves shall break upon the mocks of time and sweep them away for ever—then, on that sea of glass mingled with fire, thou shalt stand with Christ, thy friend still, owning thee notwithstanding all thy misbehaviour in the world which has gone, and loving thee now, loving thee on as long as eternity shall last. Oh! what a friend is Christ to sinners, to sinners!

Now do recollect, that we have been talking about sinners; there is a notion abroad that Jesus Christ came into the world to save respectable people, and that he will save decent sort of folks; that those of you who go regularly to a place of worship, and are good sort of people, will be saved. Now Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and who does that mean? Well, it includes some of us who have not been permitted to go into outward sin; but it also includes within its deep, broad compass those who have gone to the utmost extent of iniquity.

Talk of sinners! Walk the streets by moonlight, if you dare, and you will see sinners then. Watch when the night is dark, and the wind is howling, and the picklock is grating in the door, and you will see sinners then. Go to you jail, and walk through the wards, and see the men with heavy, over-hanging brows, men whom you would not like to meet out at night, and there are sinners there. Go to the Reformatories, and see those who have betrayed an early and a juvenile depravity, and you will see sinners there. Go across the seas to the place where a man will gnaw a bone upon which is reeking human flesh, and there is a sinner there. Go you where you will, and ransack earth to find sinners, for they are common enough; you may find them in every lane and street, of every city and town, and village and hamlet. It is for such that Jesus died. If you will select me the grossest specimen of humanity, if he be but born of woman, I will have hope of him yet, because the gospel of Christ is come to sinners, and Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save sinners. Electing love has selected some of the worst to be made the best. Redeeming love has bought, specially bought, many of the worst to be the reward of the Savior's passion. Effectual grace calls out and compels to come in many of the vilest of the vile; and it is therefore that I have tried to-night to preach my Master's love to sinners.

Oh! by that love, looking out of those eyes in tears; oh! by that love, streaming from those wounds flowing with blood; by that faithful love, that strong love, that pure, disinterested, and abiding love; oh! by the heart and by the bowels of the Savior's compassion, I do conjure you turn not away as though it were nothing to you; but believe on him and you shall be saved. Trust your souls with him and he will bring you to his Father's right hand in glory everlasting.

May God give us a blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Where to Find Fruit

A Sermon

(No. 557)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 28th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“From me is thy fruit found.”—Hosea 14:8.

THE text has a double significance. It may indicate the fruit upon which we feed, or the fruit which we are enabled to produce. If it shall mean the first, there is much of comfort in it. The Lord has compared himself, in his condescending mercy, to a green fir tree in the sentence which precedes the text. The fir tree in the East yields a most goodly shade. Neither the burning heat of the sun, nor the drops of pouring rain can pass through the dense foliage, and therefore it affords a welcome shelter to the traveler. But shade is not enough for a man; he requires food, and the fir tree fails in that respect, for it yields no repast for the hungry. To complete the picture, therefore, when the Lord deigns to compare himself to a green fir tree, he adds, “From me is thy fruit found.” Our gracious God is like a fir tree for shade, but like the apple tree among the trees of the wood for fruit. We sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto our taste. Living souls must have food to feed upon, or however well housed, they would be comparable to the king of Israel in the besieged city of Samaria. He sat in his palace of ivory, he wore his mantle of purple, and placed the crown of gold upon his head; but what availed his splendor, when neither barn-floor nor winepress could relieve his hunger? In vain all other blessings if the soul received no nourishment from on high; Jesus must not only be our life, but the bread of heaven by which that life is sustained. Glory be to his name! he is all in all to his people: we may gather fruit from him which shall satisfy the cravings of the soul.

According to Master Trapp, some read this passage, “In me is thy fruit ready.” Certain it is that at all times, whenever we approach to God, we shall find in him a ready supply for every lack. The best of trees have fruit on them only at appointed seasons. Who is so unreasonable as to look for fruit upon the peach or the plum at this season of the year? No drooping boughs beckon us to partake of their ripening crops, for Winter’s cold still nips the buds. But our God hath fruit at all times: the tree of life yieldeth its fruit every month; nay, every day and every hour, for he is “a very present help in time of trouble.”

Another translator reads the passage, “In me thy fruit is enough.” Whatever may be the accuracy of the translation, the sentiment itself is most correct. In God there is enough for all his people; and well there may be, since in him there is infinity. “I have enough, my brother,” said Esau when he met Jacob: “I have all things,” said Jacob in reply. None but the believer can say, “I have all things;” and therefore only he can be sure of having enough. Ishmael had his bottle of water, and went away into the wilderness; but it is written, that Isaac abode by the well: how happy is the soul which hath learned how to live by the well of his faithful God! for the water will be spent in the bottle, but the water will never be spent in the well. Christian, remember the all sufficiency of thy God! Let that ancient name, “*El Shaddai*”—*God all-sufficient*, sound like music in thine ear—as some translate it, “The many-breasted God,” yielding from himself the sustenance of all his creatures.

As we find the text translated, we have it, "From me is thy fruit *found*;" but the particle *from* does not mean *apart from*, but *out of me*; and to prevent misunderstanding, I shall not err if I read it *in*, for this is the force of the word in this place. The text speaks of fruit being found, implying perhaps, that we must look for it—not because there is little, or here and there a cluster, like the grape-gleanings of Abi-ezer; but because the Lord will be enquired of by the house of Israel, and would exercise our faith by making us search for the needed benefit. It is of essential service to us to make us seek, and hence we have the promise of finding to excite our diligence. Christian, look up longingly! Is thy spirit hungering? Look up to thy God now with intense desire; come before him with earnest, vehement pleadings, and thou shalt find in thy God whatsoever thy heart desireth.

Mark that little word "*thy*." As if the Lord had said, "It is *thine* already; I have freely given it; it is *thy* fruit. I bear it, but I bear it for thee; every golden apple, every luscious cluster, I will bestow on thee. Thou canst not ask me for anything which I have not given thee. For behold, I have given thee my Son, and 'in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'" Believer, hast thou not learned the sweet logic of the beloved disciple, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" In the eternal covenant, God has made over—not only all created things—but himself unto his people. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "God, even our God," saith the Psalmist. Is not that a delightful expression, "*Even our own God*?" And so, as God is your own, his fruit is your own. Every outgoing of power, every outflow of love is yours already. "In him is thy fruit found." Surely this word "*thy*" is as a little golden cup filled with a rare cordial; he who drinketh of it shall forget his misery, and remember his poverty no more. Let us not fail then, dearly beloved, to receive boldly that which is our own by covenant engagement and faithful promise. What dost thou want this morning? Surely out of the "twelve manner of fruits," there shall be something which will suit thy necessities; stand not back through shame or fear, but come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace.

Thus much for the first sense of the text; but we do not intend to use the words in that signification this morning. We think that, understanding the text the other way—"From me is that fruit found which grace produces in thee," it will be a very fitting sequel to the sermon of last Sabbath morning. You will recollect we spoke upon the withering of the fig tree which mocked the Savior with its leaves, but yielded him no fruit. There may be some who were alarmed under that sermon, and even believers who were shaken by it; such anxieties will do none of us any hurt, especially if they lead us to pant after fruitfulness. Our text, following upon the other, will direct earnest seekers where to find fruit. There are three sorts of preachers, all useful in their way, the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical; we will try to blend the three this morning, and so handle the words *doctrinally*, *experimentally*, and *practically*.

I. First. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. The doctrine of the text is twofold. First, *that the believer's fruit is his own*—it is called "thy fruit;" secondly, that though it is the believer's own, yet it *proceeds entirely from his God*.

1. The first doctrine is that *true fruit is a believer's own*. You will think this a very trite remark, but it is one which needs to be made in these days, for there are certain persons who talk of man as if he were not a thinking, intelligent, free agent. They forget his will, judgment, reason, and affections: they leave out of their consideration everything in fact which constitutes the man, and then speak of the operations of grace as though they were manual works upon wood or stone. For aught I can see, according to their way of talking, the grace of God might just as well have produced holiness in monkeys as in men, for men are generally represented as merely passive existences to

be moved by them to gratitude, or repentance, or faith, as horses are groomed in a stable or led out to be exercised. Be it never forgotten that our God deals with men as intelligent beings, having will and reason and all the other powers which make man a responsible creature; he does not ignore our manhood when he converts us by his grace. He uses means fitted for our constitution as men, "I drew them with the cords of love, with the bands of a man."

Good works are a believer's own. It were an ill thing for him if they were not; to what could we compare him but to those dead sticks with fruits tied on them, which women sell to little children? a sorry picture for a branch of Christ's vine. The believer produces fruit from his own inner self when grace has renewed him; and if his holiness were not really the outgrowth of his new heart and his renewed nature, it would be no sign of spiritual life. It is not fruit tied on us, but fruit growing out of us which proveth us to be engrafted into Christ.

True fruit is the believer's own because he *wills* through divine grace to do good works. If I performed what looked like a good work against my will, I do not see how it could be truly a good work as far as the doer is concerned. If a man could be compelled to virtue while his heart staggered away to sin, would he not be really transgressing? There is a gracious willingness towards the right thing bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. Nay, there is not only a will to holiness, but *a desire after it*. The true Christian longs after holiness and usefulness; he hungers and thirsts to do the will of his Father who is in heaven. Like his Lord in some measure, it is to him his meat and his drink to do the will of him who sent him. He can say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." He is constrained, but mark, it is not a physical constraint, for "the love of Christ constraineth us." So you see, beloved, good works are a believer's own because he is willing to do them and desires to perform them.

They are his own, again, because *he actually does them*. The Holy Ghost does not repent, nor feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked, nor preach the gospel. He gives us grace to do all these, but we ourselves do them. If the poor be fed, it must be by these hands; if souls are edified, it must be by these lips; we do not fold our arms, and shut our mouths, and then bring forth fruit unto God. We do not find ourselves taken up by the hair of our head as the prophet Habakkuk was said to have been, according to the Apocrypha, and so carried away whether we will or no, to perform a deed of charity. All glory be to the Holy Spirit, but he is not glorified by making him appear to be a physical force instead of the great spiritual Worker. We do, my brethren, bring forth fruit which is properly our own when we consider ways of usefulness, meditate methods of working, plan designs of good, act out deeds of mercy, persevere in labor, and continue in service before God.

I will tell you why I am absolutely sure a believer's works are his own, namely, because he grieves over them. The best works he ever performs he feels are his own, because they are imperfect. If there is anything good in them, he ascribes it wholly to the fact that they proceeded from God; but, inasmuch as there is something imperfect in them, he is obliged to say, "Ah! yes, this is *my* fruit. If it had been God's fruit independent of me, it would have been perfect, but inasmuch as it is imperfect, I am compelled to see that I had a hand in it. The stream *was* clear enough as it came from the fountain, but flowing through the wooden spout of my nature, it is become in some measure defiled, and so far at least is mine."

Dear friends, the whole analogy of fruitbearing must show to you that the Christian does bring forth fruit unto God, real fruit from his inner self; and if any of you think that you are going to attain to holiness by simply being passive, you are wonderfully mistaken. If you imagine you will be a pilgrim by sitting down at the wicket-gate, or be carried in a sedan-chair to glory, you will

find yourselves left behind. No, we must fight if we would win; we must travel if we would reach the Celestial City; we must wrestle, and fight, and pray. The Word of God does say "It is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure," but it does not stop there, it bids us for this very reason "Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." The passive first, but then the active. We must lie as dead at Jehovah's feet to be quickened, but being quickened, what then? Why then we walk in holiness and in the fear of God. We are first of all made trees of the Lord's right-hand planting, and we receive grace from him, and then through his grace, we ourselves do really bring forth fruit. The truth is clear enough, prove by your energetic strivings that you understand it.

2. The pith of the doctrine lieth here, that *all a believer's fruit proceeds from his God*, and that in several senses from *the divine purpose*. If you are holy, it is because he has called you to holiness. If you have good works they come to you, according to the word of the apostle concerning good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." When you see a costly vase which is the admiration of all eyes, you know that whatever of beauty there is in that vessel was originally in the artist's plan. If you have examined his sketches, you have seen every elegant line, and every graceful figure. Even so, beloved, if you have been sanctified it is according to the eternal design, which was settled in grace and wisdom, before the skies were formed.

All our fruit springs from our God as to *calling*. You were dead in trespasses and sins. There were no good works in you by nature, and there never would have been, but he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in your heart, to give you the knowledge of God, and then to turn you from dead works to serve the living and true God. You owe everything to your calling. The tree which is loaded with fruit, owes its fruit first of all, to its having been chosen to be in the garden, and next to its having been really planted there; for in our case, had we been left to grow in the wide wilderness, we should have brought forth no fruit unto God; but he took us up out of the place of barrenness, and put us in the rich soil which Jesus had watered with his own bloody sweat, and therefore we bring forth fruit.

Our fruit is found from God as to *union*. The fruit of the branch is really traceable to the root. Cut the connection and the branch dies, and no fruit is hereafter produced. By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth fruit. Every branch of grapes has been first in the root, it has passed through the stem, and flowed through the sap vessels, and fashioned itself externally into fruit, but it was first internal in the stem; so also every good work was first in Christ, and then was brought forth in us. O Christian, prize this precious doctrine of union to Christ; hold it firmly, because it is the source of every atom of fruitfulness which thou canst ever hope to know. If thou wert not joined to Jesus Christ, no fruit could ever be in thee.

Our fruit comes from God, and from God alone, as to *providence*. When the dew-drops fall from heaven, each one may whisper to the tree and say, "From me is thy fruit found." When the cloud looks down from on high, and is about to distil its liquid treasure, it may thunder to the earth beneath, "From me is thy fruit found." And the bright sun above all others, as he paints the cheek of the apple, or swells the berries of the cluster, may well say to all the trees of the garden, "From me is your fruit found." The fruit owes much to the root—that is essential to fruitfulness—but it owes very much also to external care. Beloved, how much we owe to God's grace-providence! We are greatly debtors to his common providences, in that he maketh all things work together for good. But his grace-providence, in which he provides us constantly with quickening, teaching, correction, consolation, strength, or whatever else we want—to this we owe our all of usefulness or virtue.

Our fruit is found in God as to the matter of *husbandry*. The knife which the gardener taketh from his pocket, might talk to the tree and say, "Much of thy fruit is found in me. Thou wouldst not yield such an abundance if it were not for my sharp edge. I make thee bleed a little, as I take away thy superfluous shoots, but thou hadst not such goodly clusters if it were not of me." So is it, Christian, with that pruning which the Lord gives to thee. "My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Thus the text may be read in very many ways. They will all come to one—that we have nothing, except as we receive it from above. "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" I may say, to conclude this head, that all our fruit is found in God, because he will, having been the author of it, get *all the glory of it*. Of all our spiritual life he shall have the praise, for it is all due to him, and if he giveth us a crown at the last, we will cast it at his feet.

Brethren, you know this doctrine well enough without my enlarging upon it; you know how constantly Scripture teacheth us that we can do nothing without Christ. We can sin; we can ruin our own souls; we can bring forth the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah, but anything which is lovely, and honest, and of good repute, must come from him who is glorious in working. You have no question or quibble about this. "You hath he quickened;" you trace your life to him. You doth he quicken day by day; you owe the continuance of your life to him. You know as a matter of doctrine that "in him we live and move and have our being," and that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." I need not confirm this doctrine: no argument is required. You have never erred from the truth in this respect; you could not be Christians if you did, for I hold this to be fundamental truth, in all godliness, that salvation from first to last is of the Lord. Salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Let us heartily praise him whose workmanship we are.

II. We come now to THE EXPERIENCE. Experimentally we have proof that all our fruit is in God. Let me remind you of your experience when you were the servants of the flesh. What fruit had ye then in those days? What repentance did your natural mind bring forth? What faith in Christ did your unrenewed soul ever beget or foster? What love to God ever stirred your carnal heart? What affection for the brotherhood possessed your alienated spirit? You must say that at that time you were without God and without hope, and certainly without fruit. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" A painful remembrance of your former estate compels you to feel the truth of the Lord's Word, "In me is thy fruit found."

Again, when the law began to work in your heart, and you were in a state of bondage, having enough of light to see your darkness, and enough of life to mourn your death—what fruit had ye then when ye were under the law? The law told you what you should do; did it enable you to do anything? The ten commandments set before you a perfect rule: but was it not "weak through the flesh?" You had a very clear perception of the justice and righteousness of God: did the perception reconcile you to justice or to holiness? Let me ask you, did the law of God ever make you love him? Did the awakenings of your conscience, which proceeded from it ever lead you to trust in Jesus Christ? They may have been overruled to this purpose, but the law worketh wrath, and as long as you were under it, it rather produced sin in you than righteousness. Such was Paul's experience, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," "for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." As a child might never care to run into the street, but being told not to do it, he straightway doth it by reason of the perversity of his nature, just so

it is with us by nature; the forbidden thing our flesh lusteth after. All the enmity of carnal nature is provoked to yet greater sin by the law. That which should have been a bit, becomes a spur. Cold water quencheth fire, and yet when poured on lime, produceth a vehement heat. So the law acts contrary to its own nature, by reason of the depravity of the human heart. Thus were you, my brethren, led by a very sorrowful experience, to feel that from Christ must come your fruit; for none could be produced by the efforts of the flesh, backed up by the most earnest resolution and most devout prayer, and driven onward by the whip of the law.

A sweeter experience has proved this to you. When did you begin to bear fruit? It was when you came to Christ and cast yourselves on the great atonement, and rested on the finished righteousness. Ah! what fruit you had then! Do you remember those early days? Did not your faith, and love, and zeal, form a garden of nuts, an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits? Then indeed the vine flourished, the tender grape appeared, the pomegranates budded forth, and the beds of spices gave forth their smell. Have you declined since then? Even if you have, I charge you to remember that time of love. Jesus remembers it, for he says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me into the wilderness." He recollects that time of the singing of birds, when the voice of the turtle was heard in your land. Would God this were with you ever! *He* has not forgotten it, do you not forget it, but seek to enjoy it still. Your fruit began, you know it did, when you came to Jesus Christ.

My brethren, when have you been the most fruitless? This is another part of experience. Has not it been when you have lived farthest from the Lord Jesus Christ, when you have slackened in prayer, when you have departed somewhat from the simplicity of your faith, when your graces engrossed your attention instead of your Lord, when you said, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved;" and forgot where your strength lieth—has not it been then that your fruit has ceased? Some of us know that we have nothing out of Christ by terrible soul-emptyings and humblings of heart before the Lord. Brethren, it is no pleasant thing to be clean emptied out; but such times have happened to some of us, when we have felt that if one prayer would save us, if the Holy Spirit did not aid us, we were damned; if one good thought would take us to heaven, we could not reach it; the vileness of our heart has been so clear before our eyes, that had not it been that there was a mighty God to trust to we should have given up in despair.

"How seldom do I rise to God,
Or taste the joys above!
Corruption presses down my faith,
And chills my flaming love.
When smiling mercy courts my soul
With all its heavenly charms,
This stubborn, this relentless thing,
Would thrust it from my arms."

In such seasons we do well to cry, "Quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy word." Then you feel that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which is good, you find not. It is a very easy thing for me to exhort you, but sometimes I do not find it very easy to do myself what I exhort you to do. And there are times with us, dear friends, when, though we know our interest in Christ, we are wretched under a deep sense of the creature's fickleness, sinfulness, and death. Our moan is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When you have seen the utter emptiness of all creature confidence, then you have been able to say, "From

him all my fruit must be found, for no fruit can ever come from me.” We shall find from Scripture, I am sure—let our past experience confirm it—that the more we depend upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and wait upon the Holy Spirit, pleading that his influences may operate in our hearts, the more we shall bring forth fruit unto God. If I could bear fruit without my God, I would loathe the accursed thing, for it would be the fruit of pride—the fruit of an arrogant setting up of one’s self in independence of the Creator No; the Lord deliver us from all faith, all hope, all love which do not spring from himself! May we have none of our own-manufactured graces about us. May we have nothing but that which is minted in heaven, and is therefore made of the pure metal. May we have no grace, pray no prayer, do no works, serve God in nothing except as we depend upon his strength and receive his Spirit. Any experience which comes short of a knowledge that we must get all from God, is a deceiving experience. But if you have been brought to find everything in him, beloved, this is a mark of a child of God. Cultivate a spirit of deep humiliation before the Most High; seek to know more your nothingness, and to prove more the omnipotence of the eternal God. There are two books I have tried to read, but I have not got through the first page yet. The first is the book of my own ignorance, and emptiness, and nothingness—what a great book is that! It will take us all our lives to read it, and I question whether Methuselah ever got to the last page. There is another book I must read, or else the first volume will drive me mad—it is the book of God’s all-sufficiency. I have not got through the first word of that, much less the first page, but reading the two together, I would spend all my days. This is heaven’s own literature, the wisdom which cometh from above. Less than nothing I can boast, and yet “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Having nothing yet possessing all things.” Black as the tents of Kedar, yet fair as the curtains of Solomon: dark as hell’s profoundest night, and yet “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

III. We now arrive at the PRACTICAL POINT.

1. First then, dear friends, *let us look to Jesus Christ for fruit in the same way in which we first looked to him for shade.* That sounds like something you have heard a great many times before. Very well, but have you really understood it? To give an illustration—you want to overcome an angry temper! You are given to ebullitions of passion—you try to overcome that. How do you go to work? It is very possible there are even believers here who have never tried the right way. How did I get salvation? I came to Jesus just as I was, and I trusted him to save me. Can I kill my angry temper in the same way? It is the only way in which I can ever kill it. I must go to Christ with it, and say to him, “Lord, I trust thee to deliver me from it.” This is the only death-blow it will ever receive. Are you covetous? Do you feel the world entangle you? You may struggle against this evil as long as you like, but if it be your besetting sin, you will never be delivered from it in any way but the cross. Take it to Christ. Tell him, “Lord, I have trusted thee, and thy name is Jesus—‘Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins’—Lord, this is one of my sins; save me from it!” Do not take Jesus Christ with the blood only, and without the water—that is to have only half-a-Christ. Pray to be forgiven, but ask also to be sanctified. Sing with Toplady—

“Let the water and the blood,
From thy river side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

I know what some of you do. You go to Christ for forgiveness, and then you go to the law for power to fight your sins. “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey

the truth?" Tell me, did ye receive faith by the law, or by the operation of grace? "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" The only weapon to fight sin with is the spear which pierced Christ's side. Nothing can kill the viprous brood of hell but drops of Jesus' precious blood. Take your sins to Christ's cross, sir, for the old man can only be crucified there: we are crucified with him; we are buried with him. If I be dead to the world, I must be dead with him, and if I rise again to newness of life, I must rise in him. Ordinances are nothing without Christ as means of mortification. Baptism is nothing, except as we are buried with him in baptism unto death. The Lord's Supper is nothing, except as we eat his flesh and drink his blood, and have communion with him. And your prayers and your repentances, and your tears—the whole of them put together—are not worth a farthing apart from him. Every flower which grows in your garden will wither, and the sooner it is blasted and withered the better for you; only the rose of Sharon will bloom in heaven. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good;" or helpless saints either. You must overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

2. Another practical observation is this—*let us cultivate those graces most which bring us most to Christ, for these will be the most fruitful.* Let me look well to my faith; let me see that I keep it purely stayed on him, having no supplementary confidence, but resting wholly and absolutely upon the finished work of my Lord. Let me see to my love. Let my Lord be to me altogether lovely. Lord, help me to sing, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Sometimes graciously enable me to sing, "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." Faith and love are the great fruitbearers. A gardener says, "There is such and such a twig, I must not cut that off, because it is to the young wood that I am looking for my summer fruits." So he taketh care of it. There is that, believer, a growing faith and growing love to which you must look as the fruitbearing shoots, because they pre-eminently link your soul to Christ, and most evidently have intercourse with him. Cultivate those things which lead you most to him.

3. A third practical piece of advice. *Be most in those engagements which you have experimentally proved to draw you nearest to Christ,* because it is from him that all your fruits proceed. Any holy exercise which will bring you to him will help you to bear fruit. Do you find prayer the channel of Jesus' manifestations? Do you find yourself profited in the public means of grace? Is it the breaking of bread which we love to celebrate every Sabbath day, which is most precious to you? If so, wherever Jesus Christ layeth bare his heart to you, there be you found; and if there be any one means of grace which has been more rich to you than another, use it with the greatest perseverance. Use them all, dear friends, do not neglect any, hut especially use those most which bring you nearest to your Lord.

4. Lastly, let none of us—whether we be the Lord's people or not—let none of us ever insult Christ by thinking that we are to bring fruit to him as a recommendation to his love. "From me is thy fruit found." Now there may be some saint here who has lost his evidences, and he dare not approach the throne of grace as he used to do, because he says "I have sinned—I must produce fresh fruit before I dare come." My dear friend! My dear friend! Bring fruit to Christ! How can you talk in so legal a fashion? All the fruit you ever will have you must first get from him! Come to him as you are and get your fruit out of him. Never suppose that you must bring Christ a present or else you must not come to him. He does not want your money. If he takes it he will give it back to you in your sack's mouth. He will receive your fruit as an offering, but never as a reconciliation. There are those here this morning who are not converted as yet. They are saying, "I dare not seek

the Lord, I dare not trust Christ. I know the gospel is, trust Christ and you are saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but I must not trust him, I am a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I am a Sabbath-breaker, I will wait until I am better and then I will come to Christ." Why how can you talk thus? "From him is thy fruit found." If there be any fruit you must come to Jesus Christ for it. Am I, if I am poor and ragged, am I to buy a new coat before I may beg a garment? What a strange proposal that I should do for myself what Christ came to do. How can that be reasonable? If I saw a man standing outside the baths and wash-houses, and he should say, "Well really, I've just come home from my work and am as black as a sweep, but I dare not go into those baths until I have washed my face first." I should say, "How foolish! it is in the bath that your washing is to be found." There is no fitness wanted for Christ but that which is in Christ: nothing wanted in you, everything is in him. To use the old proverb, "Why carry coals to Newcastle?" Who would think it a profitable business for our London merchants, in the cold winter time, when the price of coals is very high, to charter all the ships they can, and send them laden with coals to Newcastle? If they did so, you would think them mad. And yet there are many sinners penniless, comfortless, with no good thing of their own, who want to bring good works to Jesus! This is carrying coals to Newcastle with a vengeance. Oh! folly! folly! folly! Go with your ship all black and empty, sail up the harbour, and the pit's mouth will soon yield to you an abundance of precious store. Go to Jesus as you are. Do you want faith to-day—repentance—grace? Go to Christ for it. Go to him, resting on him, dependent on him, believing that he is ready to save you, to begin, to carry on, and finish your salvation. He will be as good as you ever believe him to be, and infinitely better. If thou canst believe him princely enough to put all thy sins away, and to cover thee with his righteousness, he will do it, for never man thought too well of Christ. If thou canst get a big thought of Christ, thou big sinner—if thou canst believe on the eternal Son of the eternal Father, who once poured out his blood in streams on Calvary thou art secure. God help thee. Amen.

A Bundle of Myrrh

A Sermon

(No. 558)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 28th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.”—Song of Solomon 1:13.

CERTAIN DIVINES have doubted the inspiration of Solomon's Song; others have conceived it to be nothing more than a specimen of ancient love-songs, and some have been afraid to preach from it because of its highly poetical character. The true reason for all this avoidance of one of the most heavenly portions of God's Word lies in the fact that the spirit of this Song is not easily attained. Its music belongs to the higher spiritual life, and has no charm in it for unspiritual ears. The Song occupies a sacred enclosure into which none may enter unprepared. “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,” is the warning voice from its secret tabernacles. The historical books I may compare to the outer courts of the Temple; the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Psalms, bring us into the holy place or the Court of the priests; but the Song of Solomon is *the most holy place*: the holy of holies, before which the veil still hangs to many an untaught believer. It is not all the saints who can enter here, for they have not yet attained unto the holy confidence of faith, and that exceeding familiarity of love which will permit them to commune in conjugal love with the great Bridegroom. We are told that the Jews did not permit the young student to read the Canticles—that years of full maturity were thought necessary before the man could rightly profit by this mysterious Song of loves; possibly they were wise, at any rate the prohibition foreshadowed a great truth. The Song is, in truth, a book for full-grown Christians. Babes in grace may find their carnal and sensuous affections stirred up by it towards Jesus, whom they know, rather “after the flesh” than in the spirit; but it needs a man of fuller growth, who has leaned his head upon the bosom of his Master, and been baptized with his baptism, to ascend the lofty mountains of love on which the spouse standeth with her beloved. The Song, from the first verse to the last, will be clear to those who have received an unction from the holy One, and know all things. (1 John 2:20.) You are aware, dear friends, that there are very few commentaries upon the Epistles of John. Where we find fifty commentaries upon any book of St. Paul, you will hardly find one upon John. Why is that? Is the book too difficult? The words are very simple; there is hardly a word of four syllables anywhere in John's Epistles. Ah! but they are so saturated through and through with the spirit of love, which also perfumes this Book of Solomon, that those who are not taught in the school of communion, cry out, “We cannot read it, for it is sealed.” The Song is a golden casket, of which love is the key rather than learning. Those who have not attained unto heights of affection, those who have not been educated by familiar intercourse with Jesus, cannot come near to this mine of treasure, “seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of heaven.” O for the soaring eagle wing of John, and the far-seeing dove's eyes of Solomon; but the most of us are blind and cannot see afar off. May God be pleased to make us grow in grace, and give us so much of the Holy Spirit, that with feet like hind's feet we may stand

upon the high places of Scripture, and this morning have some near and dear intercourse with Christ Jesus.

Concerning our text, let us talk very simply, remarking first, that *Christ is very precious to believers*; secondly, that *there is good reason why he should be*; thirdly, that *mingled with this sense of preciousness, there is a joyous consciousness of possession of him*; and that therefore, fourthly, *there is an earnest desire for perpetual fellowship with him*. If you look at the text again, you will see all these matters in it.

I. First, then, CHRIST JESUS IS UNUTTERABLY PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS. The words manifestly imply this: "A bundle of myrrh is my *well-beloved* unto me." She calls him her "well-beloved," and so expresses her love most emphatically; it is not merely *beloved*, but *well-beloved*. Then she looks abroad about her, to find a substance which shall be at once valuable in itself and useful in its properties; and lighting upon myrrh, she saith, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me." Without looking into the figure just now, we keep to the statement that Christ is precious to the believer.

Observe first, that *nothing gives the believer so much joy as fellowship with Christ*. Ask yourselves, you who have eaten at his table and have been made to drink of his cup, where can such sweetness be found as you have tasted in communion with Jesus? The Christian has joy as other men have in the common mercies of life. For him there are charms in music, excellence in painting, and beauty in sculpture; for him the hills have sermons of majesty, the rocks hymns of sublimity, and the valleys lessons of love. He can look upon all things with an eye as clear and joyous as another man's; he can be glad both in God's gifts and God's works. He is not dead to the happiness of the household: around his hearth he finds happy associations, without which life were drear indeed. His children fill his home with glee, his wife is his solace and delight, his friends are his comfort and refreshment. He accepts the comforts which soul and body can yield him according as God seeth it wise to afford them unto him; but he will tell you that in all these separately, yea, and in all of them added together, he doth not find such substantial delight as he doth in the person of his Lord Jesus. Brethren, there is a wine which no vineyard on earth ever yielded; there is a bread which even the corn-fields of Egypt could never bring forth. You and I have said, when we have beheld others finding their god in earthly comforts, "You may boast in gold, and silver, and raiment, but I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." In our esteem, the joys of earth are little better than husks for swine compared with Jesus the heavenly manna. I would rather have one mouthful of Christ's love, and a sip of his fellowship, than a whole world full of carnal delights. What is the chaff to the wheat? What is the sparkling paste to the true diamond? What is a dream to the glorious reality? What is time's mirth in its best trim compared to our Lord Jesus in his most despised estate? If you know anything of the inner life, you will all of you confess that our highest, purest, and most enduring joys must be the fruit of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. No spring yields such sweet water as that well of God which was digged with the soldier's spear. As for the house of feasting, the joy of harvest, the mirth of marriage, the sports of youth, the recreations of maturer age, they are all as the small dust of the balance compared with the joy of Immanuel our best beloved. As the Preacher said, so say we, "I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." All earthly bliss is of the earth earthy, but the comforts of Christ's presence are like himself heavenly. We can review our communion with Jesus, and find no regrets of emptiness therein; there are no dregs in this wine; no dead flies in this ointment. The joy of the Lord is solid and enduring. Vanity hath not looked upon it, but discretion and prudence

testify that it abideth the test of years, and is in time and in eternity worthy to be called "*the only true delight.*"

"What is the world with all its store?

"'Tis but a bitter sweet;

When I attempt to pluck the rose,

A pricking thorn I meet.

Here perfect bliss can ne'er be found,

The honey's mix'd with gall;

'Midst changing scenes and dying friends,

Be thou my All in All."

We may plainly see that Christ is very precious to the believer, because *to him there is nothing good without Christ*. Believer, have you not found in the midst of plenty a dire and sore famine if your Lord has been absent? The sun was shining, but Christ had hidden himself and all the world was black to you; or it was a night of tempest, and there were many stars, but since the bright and morning star was gone on that dreary main, where you were tossed with doubts and fears, no other star could shed so much as a ray of light. O, what a howling wilderness is this world without my Lord! If once he groweth angry, and doth, though it be for a moment, hide himself from me, withered are the flowers of my garden; my pleasant fruits decay; the birds suspend their songs, and black night lowers over all my hopes. Nothing can compensate for the company of the Savior: all earth's candles cannot make daylight if the Sun of Righteousness be gone.

On the other hand, *when all earthly comforts have failed you, have you not found quite enough in your Lord?* Your very-worst times have been your best times? You must almost cry to go back to your bed of sickness, for Jesus made it as a royal throne, whereon you reigned with him. Those dark nights—ah! they were not dark, your bright days since then have been darker far. Do you remember when you were poor? Oh! how near Christ was to you, and how rich he made you! You were despised and rejected of men, and no man gave you a good word! Ah! sweet was his fellowship then, and how delightful to hear him say, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God!" As afflictions abound, even so do consolations abound by Christ Jesus. The devil, like Nebuchadnezzar, heated the furnace seven times hotter, but who would have it less furiously blazing? No wise believer; for the more terrible the heat the greater the glory in the fact that we were made to tread those glowing coals, and not a hair of our head was singed, nor so much as the smell of fire passed upon us, because the Son of God walked those glowing coals in our company. Yes, we can look with resignation upon penury, disease, and even death; for if all comforts be taken from us, we should still be blest, so long as we enjoy the presence of the Lord our Savior.

Nor should I be straining the truth if I say that *the Christian would sooner give up anything than forsake his Master*. I have known some who have been afraid to look that text in the face which saith, "He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me," or that—"Except a man hate (or love less) his father and mother, and wife and children, he cannot be my disciple." Yet I have found that those have frequently proved to be the most sincere lovers of Jesus who have been most afraid that he had not the best place in their hearts. Perhaps the best way is not to sit down calmly to weigh our love, for it is not a thing to be measured with cool judgment, but put your love to some practical test. Now, if it came to this, that you must deny Christ, or give up the dearest thing you have, would you deliberate? The Lord knoweth I speak what I feel in my own soul—when it comes to that, I could not hesitate a second. If there were a stake and burning faggots,

I might flinch from the fire, but so mighty is divine love that it would doubtless drive me to the flames sooner than let me leave Jesus. But if it comes to this, "Wilt thou lose thine eyes or give up Christ?" I would cheerfully be blind. Or if it were asked, "Wilt thou have thy right arm withered from its socket or give up Christ?" Ay; let both arms go; let them both drop from the shoulder blades. Or if it should be, "Wilt thou be from this day dumb and never speak before the multitude?" Oh! better to be dumb than lose him. Indeed, when I talk of this it seems to be an insult to my Master, to put hands, and eyes, and tongue, in comparison with him.

"Nor to my eyes is light so dear
Nor friendship half so sweet."

If you compare life itself with Jesus, it is not to be named in the same day. If it should be said, "Will you live without Christ or die with Christ?" you could not deliberate, for to die with Christ is to live with Christ for ever; but to live without Christ is to die the second death, the terrible death of the soul's eternal perdition. No, there is no choice there. I think we could go further, dear friends, and say, not only could we give up everything, but I think, when love is fervent, and the flesh is kept under, *we could suffer anything with Christ*. I met, in one of Samuel Rutherford's letters, an extraordinary expression, where he speaks of the coals of divine wrath all falling upon the head of Christ, so that not one might fall upon his people. "And yet," saith he, "if one of those coals should drop from his head upon mine and did utterly consume me, yet if I felt it was a part of the coals that fell on him, and I was bearing it for his sake, and in communion with him, I would choose it for my heaven." That is a strong thing to say, that to suffer with Christ would be his heaven, if he assuredly knew that it was for and with Christ, that he was suffering. Oh! there is indeed a heavenliness about suffering for Jesus. *His* cross hath such a majesty and mystery of delight in it, that the more heavy it becometh, the more lightly doth it sit upon the believer's shoulders.

One thing I know proveth, beloved, that you esteem Christ to be very precious, namely, that *you want others to know him too*. Do you not feel a pining in your souls till others hearts be filled with the love of Christ? My eyes could weep themselves out of their sockets for some of you who are ignorant of my Master's love. Poor souls! ye are sitting outside the feast when the door is wide open, and the king himself is within. Ye choose to be out in the highways and under the hedges sooner than come to this wedding-feast, where the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready—oh! did you know *him*, did you know *him*, you would never be able to live without him. If your eyes had ever seen him once, or if your heart had ever known the charm of his presence, you would think it to be a hell to be for a moment without Christ. O poor blind eyes which cannot see him, and deaf ears which cannot hear him, and hard stony hearts which cannot melt before him, and hell-besotted souls which cannot appreciate the majesty of his love, God help you! God help you! and bring you yet to know and rejoice in him. The more your love grows, beloved, the more insatiable will be your desire that others should love him, till it will come to this that you will be, like Paul, "in labors more abundant," spending and being spent that you may bring the rest of Christ's elect body into union with their glorious head.

II. But, secondly, THE SOUL CLINGETH TO CHRIST, AND SHE HATH GOOD REASON FOR SO DOING, for her own words are "A *bundle of myrrh* is my well-beloved unto me." We will take the myrrh first, and then consider the bundle next.

1. *Jesus Christ is like myrrh*. Myrrh may be well the type of Christ for its *preciousness*. It was an exceedingly expensive drug. We know that Jacob sent some of it down into Egypt as being one of the choice products of the land. It is always spoken of in Scripture as being a rich, rare, and

costly substance. But no myrrh could ever compare with him, for Jesus Christ is so precious, that if heaven and earth were put together they could not buy another Savior. When God gave to the world his Son, he gave the best that heaven had. Take Christ out of heaven, and there is nothing for God to give. Christ was God's all, for is it not written, "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily?" Oh! precious gift of the whole of deity in the person of Christ! How inestimably precious is that body of his which he took of the substance of the virgin! Well might angels herald the coming of this immaculate Savior, well might they watch over his holy life, for he is precious in his birth, and precious in all his actions. How precious is he, dear friends, as myrrh in the offering of his great atonement! What a costly sacrifice was that! At what a price were ye redeemed! Not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. How precious is he too, in his resurrection! He justifies all his people at one stroke—rising from the dead—that glorious sun scatters all the nights of all his people by one rising. How precious is he in his ascension, as he leads captivity captive, and scattereth gifts among men! And how precious to-day in those incessant pleadings of his through which the mercies of God come down like the angels upon Jacob's ladder to our needy souls! Yes, he is to the believer in every aspect like myrrh for rarity and excellence.

Myrrh, again, was *pleasant*. It was a pleasant thing to be in chamber perfumed with myrrh. Through the nostrils myrrh conveys delight to the human mind; but Christ gives delight to his people, not through one channel, but through every avenue. It is true that all his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, but he hath not spiritual smell alone, the taste shall be gratified too, for we eat his flesh and drink his blood. Nay, our feeling is ravished, when his left hand is under us and his right hand doth embrace us. As for his voice it is most sweet, and our soul's ear is charmed with its melody. Let God give him to our sight, and what can our eyes want more? Yea, he is altogether lovely. Thus every gate of the soul hath commerce with Christ Jesus in the richest and rarest commodities. There is no way by which a human spirit can have communion with Jesus which doth not yield unto that spirit fresh and varied delights. O beloved, we cannot compare him merely to myrrh. He is everything which is good to look upon, or to taste, or to handle, or to smell—all put together in one, the quintessence of all delights. As all the rivers run into the sea, so all delights center into Christ. The sea is not full, but Jesus is full to the very brim.

Moreover, myrrh is *perfuming*. It is used to give a sweet smell to other things. It was mingled with the sacrifice, so that it was not only the smoke of the fat of kidneys of rams, and the flesh of fat beasts, but there was a sweet fragrance of myrrh, which went up with the sacrifice to heaven. And surely, beloved, Jesus Christ is very perfuming to his people. Does not he perfume their prayers, so that the Lord smelleth a sweet savor? Doth he not perfume their songs, so that they become like vials full of odour sweet? Doth he not perfume our ministry, for is it not written, "He causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." Our persons are perfumed with Christ. Whence get we our spikenard but from him? Whither shall we go to gather camphire which shall make our persons and presence acceptable before God but to him? "For we are accepted in the beloved." "Ye are complete in him"—"perfect in Christ Jesus"—"for he hath made us kings and priests unto our God, and we shall reign for ever and ever."

Myrrh has *preserving* qualities. The Egyptians used it in embalming the dead: and we find Nicodemus and the holy women bringing myrrh and aloes in which to wrap the dead body of the Savior. It was used to prevent corruption. What is there which can preserve the soul but Christ Jesus? What is the myrrh which keeps our works, which in themselves are dead, and corrupt, and

rotten—what, I say, keeps them from becoming a foul stench in the nostrils of God, but that Christ is in them? What we have done out of love to Christ, what we have offered through his mediation, what has been perfumed by faith in his person, becomes acceptable. God looketh upon anything we say, or anything we do, and if he seeth Christ in it, he accepteth it; but if there be no Christ, he putteth it away as a foul thing. See to it then, beloved, that you never pray a prayer which is not sweetened with Christ. I would never preach a sermon—the Lord forgive me if I do—which is not full to overflowing with my Master. I know one who said I was always on the old string, and he would come and hear me no more; but if I preached a sermon without Christ in it, he would come. Ah! he will never come while this tongue moves, for a sermon without Christ in it—a Christless sermon! A brook without water; a cloud without rain; a well which mocks the traveler; a tree twice dead, plucked up by the root; a sky without a sun; a night without a star. It were a realm of death—a place of mourning for angels and laughter for devils. O Christian, we must have Christ! Do see to it that every day when you wake you give a fresh savor of Christ upon you by contemplating his person. Live all the day, trying as much as lieth in you, to season your hearts with him, and then at night, lie down with him upon your tongue. It is said of Samuel Rutherford, that he often did fall asleep talking about Christ, and was often heard in his dreams, saying sweet things about his Savior. There is nothing which can preserve us and keep us from sin, and make our works holy and pure, like this “bundle of myrrh.”

Myrrh again, was used as a *disinfectant*. When the fever is abroad, we know people who wear little bags of camphor about their necks. They may be very good; I do not know. But the Orientals believed that in times of pest and plague, a little bag of myrrh worn between the breasts would be of essential service to whoever might carry it. And there doubtless is some power in myrrh to preserve from infectious disease. Well, brethren, certain I am it is so with Christ. You have to go into the world which is like a great leper-house; but if you carry Christ with you, you will never catch the world's disease. A man may be worth never so much money, he will never get worldly if he keepeth Christ on his heart. A man may have to tug and toil for his livelihood, and be very poor, he will never be discontented and murmuring if he lives close to Christ. O you who have to handle the world, see to it that you handle the Master more than the world. Some of you have to work with drunken and swearing men; others are cast into the midst of frivolities—O take my Master with you! and sin's plagues can have no influence upon your moral nature.

But myrrh was believed by the ancient physicians to do more than this—it was a *cure*—it did not merely prevent, but it healed. I do not know how many diseases are said to be healed by the use of myrrh, nor do I altogether suppose that these Oriental physicians spoke from facts, for they were too much given to ascribe qualities to drugs, which those drugs did not possess; however even modern physicians believe myrrh to have many valuable medical properties. Certain is it that your Christ is the best medicine for the soul. His name is Jehovah Rophi—“I am the Lord that healeth them.” When we see Luke called “the beloved physician,” we almost grudge him the name. I will take it from him and give it to my Master, for he deserves it far more than Luke. The beloved physician! he touched the leper, and he was made whole. He did but look upon those who were lame. and they leaped as a hart. His voice startled the silence of Hades, and brought back the soul to the body. What cannot Christ do? He can heal anything. You who are sick this morning, sick with doubts and fears, you who are sick with temptation, you who struggle with an angry temper, or with the death-like sleep of sloth, get Christ, and you are healed. Here all things meet, and in all these things we may say, “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me.”

I have not done yet, for myrrh was used in the East as a *beautifier*. We read of Esther, that before she was introduced to Ahasuerus, she and the virgins were bidden to prepare themselves, and among other things, they used myrrh. The belief of Oriental women was, that it removed wrinkles and stains from the face, and they used it constantly for the perfecting of their charms. I do not know how that may be, but I know that nothing makes the believer so beautiful as being with Christ. He is beautiful in the eyes of God, of holy angels, and of his fellow-men. I know some Christians whom it is a great mercy to speak to: if they come into your cottage, they leave behind them tokens of remembrance, in the choice words they utter. To get them into the Church is a thousand mercies, and if they join the Sunday-school, of what value they are! Let me tell you that the best gauge of a Christian's usefulness will be found in the degree in which he has been with Jesus and learned of him. Do not tell me it is the scholar, do not say to me it is the man of eloquence, do not say it is the man of substance—well we would have all these consecrate what they have to Christ—but it is the man of God who is the strong man; it is the man who has been with Jesus who is the pillar of the Church; and a light to the world. O brethren, may the beauty of the Lord be upon us through being much with Christ.

And I must not close this point without saying that myrrh might well be used as an emblem of our Lord from *its connection with sacrifice*. It was one of the precious drugs used in making the holy oil with which the priests were anointed and the frankincense which burned perpetually before God. It is this, the sacrificial character of Christ, which is at the root and bottom of all that Christ is most precious to his people. O Lamb of God our sacrifice, we must remember thee.

2. Now there has been enough, surely, said about the myrrh. Have patience while we just notice that he is called a bundle of myrrh, or as some translate it, a bag of myrrh, or a box of myrrh.

There were three sorts of myrrh; there was the myrrh in sprigs, which being burnt made a sweet smell; then there was myrrh, a dried spice; and then thirdly, there was myrrh a flowing oil. We do not know to which there is reference here. But why is it said “a *bundle* of myrrh?” First, for *the plenty of it*. He is not a drop of it, he is a casket full. He is not a sprig or flower of it, but a whole bundle full. There is enough in Christ for my necessities. There is more in Christ than I shall ever know—perhaps more than I shall understand even in heaven.

A bundle again, for *variety*; for there is in Christ not only the one thing needful, but “ye are complete in him;” there is everything needful. Take Christ in his different characters, and you will see a marvellous variety—prophet, priest, king, husband, friend, shepherd. Take him in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, second advent, take him in his virtue, gentleness, courage, self-denial, love, faithfulness, truth, righteousness—everywhere it is a bundle. Some of God's judgments are manifold, but *all* God's mercies are manifold, and Christ being the sum of God's mercies, hath in fold upon fold of goodness. He is “a bundle of myrrh” for variety.

He is a bundle of myrrh again, for *preservation*—not loose myrrh to be dropped on the floor or trodden on, but myrrh tied up, as though God bound up all virtues and excellencies in his Son: not myrrh spilt on the ground, but myrrh in a box—myrrh kept in a casket. Such is Christ. The virtue and excellence which goeth out of Christ is quite as strong today as in the day when the woman touched the hem of his garment and was healed. “Able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through him,” is he still unto this hour.

A bundle of myrrh again, to shew *how diligently we should take care of it*. We must bind him up, we must keep our thoughts of him and knowledge of him as under lock and key, lest the devil

should steal anything from us. We must treasure up his words, prize his ordinances, obey his precepts, tie him up and keep him ever with us as a precious bundle of myrrh.

And yet again, a bundle of myrrh *for speciality*, as if he were not common myrrh for everybody. No, no, no; there is distinguishing, discriminating grace—a bundle tied up for his people and labelled with their names from before the foundation of the world. No doubt there is an allusion here to the scent bottle used in every land. Jesus Christ is a bottle of myrrh, and he doth not give forth his smell to everybody but to those who know how to draw forth the stopper, who understand how to get into communion with him, to have close dealings with him. He is not myrrh for all who are in the house but for those who know how to put the bottle to their nostrils and receive the sweet perfume. Oh! blessed people whom the Lord hath admitted into his secrets! Oh! choice and happy people who are thus made to say “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me.”

But I am afraid I tire you, especially those of you who do not know anything about my subject. There are some such here who know no more about what I am talking of than if they were Mahometans. They are listening to a new kind of religion now. The religion of Christ is as high above them as is the path of the eagle above that of the fish, and as much hidden from them as the way of the serpent on the rock from the eye of man. This is a path which the eagle’s eye hath not seen, nor hath the lion’s whelp trodden it; but I trust there are some here who know it.

III. Our third remark was to be—that with a sense of Christ’s preciousness is combined A CONSCIOUSNESS OF POSSESSION. It is “my well-beloved.” My dear hearer, is Christ *your* well-beloved? A Savior—that is well; but *my* Savior—that is the best of the best. What is the use of bread if it is not mine? I may die of hunger. Of what value is gold, if it be not mine? I may yet die in a workhouse. I want this preciousness to be *mine*. “My well-beloved.” Have you ever laid hold on Christ by the hand of faith?

Will you take him again this morning, brethren, in Jesus? I know you will. Would that those who never did take him, would take him now and say, “My saviour.” There stands his atonement, freely offered to you, may you have the grace to take it, and say, “My Savior, my Savior,” this morning. Has your heart taken him? It is well for us to use both hands, not only the hand of faith, but the hand of love, for this is the true embrace when both arms meet around our beloved. Do you love him? O souls, do you LOVE Christ, with an emphasis upon the word. Do not talk to me about a religion which dwells in the head and never gets into the heart. Get rid of it as quickly as you can; it will never bring you to heaven. It is not “I believe this and that” merely, but “I love.” Ah! some who have been great fools in doctrine have been very wise in love. We tell our children to learn things “by heart.” I think you can, you love Jesus, and if you cannot you must confess as I do,

“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,
Had I no love to thee;
Sooner than not my Savior love,
O may I cease to be.”

But that is not the only word. “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved *unto me*.” That is not a redundant expression, “unto *me*.” He is not so to many. Ah! my Lord is a root out of a dry ground to multitudes. A three-volume novel suits them better than his Book. They would sooner go to a play or a dance than they would have any fellowship with him. They can see the beauties upon the cheeks of this Jezebel world, but they cannot see the perfections of my Lord and Master. Well! well! well! Let them say what they will, and let them think as they please, every creature hath its own joy, but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved *unto me*”—unto *me*—unto *me*, and if there is

not another who finds him so, yet “a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*.” I would it were not with others as it is—I would that others did think so also of him; but let them say what they will, they shall not drive me out of my knowledge of this—“a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*.” The infidel saith, “There is no God.” The atheist would altogether laugh me to scorn. They shall say what they will, but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*.” Even bishops have been found who will take away a part of his Book, and so rend his garments, and rob him; and there be some who say his religion is out of date, and grace has lost his power; and they go after philosophy and vain conceit, and I know not what, but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*.” They may have no nostril for him, they may have no desire after him; so let it be, but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*.” I know there are some who say they have tried him and not found him sweet, and who have turned away from him and gone back to the beggarly elements of the world because they see nothing in Christ that they should desire him; but “a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*.” Ah! Christian, this is what you want, a personal experience, a positive experience; you want to know for *yourself*; for there is no religion which is worth a button which is not burnt into you by personal experience; and there is no religion worth a straw which does not spring from your soul, which does lay not hold upon the very vitals of your spirit. Yes, you must say—I hope you can say as you go down those steps this morning, and enter again to-morrow into that busy, giddy world—you must say, “Let the whole world go astray, ‘a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*.’”

IV. Now the practical point closes it. A SENSE OF POSSESSION AND A SENSE OF ENJOYMENT WILL ALWAYS LEAD THE CHRISTIAN TO DESIRE CONSTANT FELLOWSHIP. “He” or rather “it shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.” The Church does not say, “I will put this bundle of myrrh on my shoulders”—Christ is no burden to a Christian. She does not say, “I will put this bundle of myrrh on my back”—the Church does not want to have Christ concealed from her face. She desires to have him where she can see him, and near to her heart. The bundle of myrrh shall lie all night upon my heart. The words “All night” are not in the original; I do not know how they got into the translation. He is to be always there, not only all night but all day. It would be always night if he were not there, and it cannot be night when he is there, for

“Midst darkest shade, if he appear,
My dawning has begun.”

He shall always be upon our heart. I think that expression just means these three things. It is an expression of *desire*—her desire that she may have the consciousness of Christ’s love continually. Do not you feel the same desire. O Christian, if thou hast ever been made like the chariots of Amminadib, it will be ill for thee if thou canst be content to be otherwise. If thou hast but once tasted Christ, thou wilt wait to feed upon him all day and all night, and as long as thou livest. My desire is that Jesus may abide with me from morn till even, in the world and in the Church, when I awake, when I sleep, when I go abroad, and when I come home into the bosom of my family. Is not that your desire that he may be always with you?

But then, it is not only her desire, but it is also her *confidence*. She seems to say, “He will be with me thus.” You may have a suspension of visible fellowship with Christ, but Christ never will go away from people really. He will be all night betwixt your breasts; he will at all times abide faithful to you. He may close his eyes and hide his face from you, but his heart never can depart from you. He has set you as a seal upon his heart, and increasingly will make you sensible of it.

Recollect there is no suspension of Christ's union with his people, and no suspension of those saving influences which always make his people to stand complete in him.

To conclude, this is also *a resolve*. She desires, she believes, and she resolves it. Lord, thou shalt be with me, thou shalt be with me always. I appeal to you, brethren, will you not make this resolve in God's strength this morning to cling close to Christ. Do not go talking, as you go home, about all sorts of nonsense; do not spend this afternoon in communion with folly and vanity, but throughout this day let your soul keep to Christ, to nothing but Christ. This evening we shall come to his table, to eat bread and drink wine, in remembrance of him, let us try if we can, that nothing shall make us give up Christ all this day. Have you got him, hold him and do not let him go till you bring him to your mother's house, to the chamber of her who bare you. Then there will be the family prayer at night. O, seek to keep him till you put your head upon the pillow. And then, on Monday morning, some of you have to go to work, and as soon as you get into the workshop or the factory, you say, "Now I must lose my Master." No, do not lose him. Hold him fast when your hand plies the hammer, and when your fingers hold the needle, still cling to him, in the market or in the exchange, on board ship, or in the field, do not let him go. You *may have him with you all day*. The Mahometan usually wears a piece of the Koran round his neck, and one, when converted to Christianity, put his New Testament in a little silken bag, and always wore it there. We need not such outward signs, but let us always have the Savior there; let us hang him about our neck as a charm against all evil; seek his blessed company, place him as a star upon your breast to be your honor and joy.

Well, I have done, but I must have a word with the unconverted. There are some who can say, "I will have Christ always *on my tongue*." Away with tongue religion. You must have him on your heart. Ah! there are some who say, "*I hope I shall have Christ on my heart in all eternity*." You cannot have Christ in eternity if you do not have him in time. If you despise him to-day—in this life, he will reject you to-morrow in the world to come; and if *he* call and you refuse, one day *you* will call and he refuse. *Do not put up with desires merely*, dear friends—some of you have desires, and nothing more. Do not only desire Christ, but get him. Do not stop short with saying, "I should like to have him in my heart;" give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids, till by humble faith you have taken Christ to be your all in all. May the Lord bless these poor words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The Cripple at Lystra

A Sermon

(No. 559)

by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.”—Acts 14:9-10.

I HAVE READ in your hearing the story of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in the town of Lystra. The name of Christ was there totally unknown. They were a sort of country people, partly pastoral and partly agricultural, who seem to have been deeply sunken in superstition. At the gates of their city there stood a great temple dedicated to Jupiter, and they appear to have been his zealous votaries. Coming down from the mountain-side Paul and Barnabas enter the town, and when a fitting time has come, they stand up in the marketplace, or the street, and begin to talk concerning Jesus, the Son of God, who had come down from heaven, had suffered and died, and had again ascended up on high. The people gather round them. Among the rest a cripple listens with very marked attention. They preach again. The crowds are still greater, and on one occasion, while Paul is in the middle of a sermon, using his eyes to watch the audience as all preachers should do, and not looking up at the ceiling, or at the gallery-front as some preachers are wont to do, he marks this cripple, fixes his eyes upon him, and looks earnestly in his face. Either by the exercise of his judgment, or by the promptings of revelation, the apostle gathers that this man has faith—faith to be healed. In order to attract the attention of the people, to glorify the name of Christ, to publish more widely his glorious fame, and to make the miracle well known, Paul stops the sermon, and with a loud voice cries, “Stand upright on thy feet.” The cripple leaps and praises God. The population are all amazed, and knowing that there was a tradition that Jupiter and Mercury had once appeared in that very town, a tradition preserved in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid to the present day, they at once conclude that surely Jupiter and Mercury must be come again. They fix upon Barnabas, who was probably the elder and the nobler looking man, for Jupiter; and as Jupiter was always attended by Mercurins, as a messenger, and Mercury was the god of eloquence, they conclude that Paul must be Mercury. They rush to the temple, they tell the priests that the gods have come down. The priests, only too ready to foster popular credulity, and pander to it, bring forth the sacred bullocks and the garlands, and are about to offer sacrifice before Paul and Barnabas. Such homage these men of God indignantly refuse; they rend their clothes; they beseech them to do no such thing, for they are nothing but men; yet hardly with earnest words can they stay the people. But the next day certain Jews came thither and produced a counter irritation in the simple minds of the people. No very difficult task where a rude fanaticism rouses the wild passions of the mob. Such an assembly must rage, whether it be with redundant applause or with derisive jeers. Accordingly, Paul finds himself exposed to peril; he is stoned through the streets, dragged forth as dead, and left by the very men who worshipped him but yesterday as a god, left to die as a villain outside the city gates.

But Paul's preaching had not been in vain. There were some few disciples who remained faithful. His ministry was rewarded and owned of God.

There are two or three points in this narrative to which I shall call your attention to-night, making, however, the lame man the center of the picture. We shall notice, first of all, *what preceded this lame man's faith*; secondly, *wherein lay his faith to be healed*; and thirdly, *what is the teaching of the miracle itself, and the blessing which the lame man obtained through faith*.

I. WHAT WAS IT WHICH PRECEDED HIS FAITH?

That "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," is a great and universal rule; but the hearing of what? Doubtless the hearing of the gospel is intended. On turning to your Bibles you will find it is written—"And there they preached the gospel." What, Paul, dost thou not change thy voice? Thou hast preached the gospel in the cities of Iconium and Antioch, where there were enlightened and intelligent hearers; if the gospel suited them, surely it will not do for these wolfish boors! Why go and preach to these poor, ignorant, superstitious fanatics the very same truths which you spoke to your enlightened Jewish brethren? But he does do so, my friends. The very gospel which he preached at Damascus in the synagogue he preaches here at Lystra in the market-place. He makes no difference between the education of his hearers in different places; he has the same gospel to preach to them both. You recollect that Paul went to Ephesus, and Ephesus, as a city, was besotted with a belief in sorcery. The people had given themselves up to practice magical arts. What is the right way to begin to preach at Ephesus? Deliver a course of lectures upon the impossibility and absurdity of such superstition? No, sir, nothing of the kind. Preach Christ, preach the gospel; and as Jesus Christ is lifted up they bring their magical books and make a bonfire of them in the open forum. But here is a polished governor, Sergius Paulus, sitting upon the judgment-seat. What shall be preached to him? Would it not be well to begin with a dissertation on politics, and to show that the Christian religion does not interfere with proper government, that it does not stir up the people to anarchy? No, sir, nothing of the kind. There is nothing for Sergius Paulus any more than there is for Elymas the sorcerer, but the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul goes to Athens. Now the Athenians are the most learned and philosophical of the whole race of men. What will Paul preach there? The gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel. He may change his *tones*, but never his *matter*. It is the same remedy for the same disease, he the men what they may. He comes to Corinth, and here you have not only polished manners, but the very refinement of vice. It is a city, an emporium of trade, and a sort of central depot of sin. What then? Will he now, to please the trader, assume a different dialect? Not he! The Christ for Athens is the Christ for Corinth too. And now see him. He has come to Lycaonia, and is preaching at Lystra. Here is an ignorant set of people who worship an image. Why does he not begin by preaching of the deity? Why does he not talk to them of the Trinity in unity? Why does he not try and confute their notions about their gods? No, my dear sir, he will do nothing of the kind; that may be done incidentally, but the first and the last thing that Paul will do at Lystra is, there he will preach the gospel. O glorious gospel of the blessed God! Wherever we take thee thou art suited to the wants of men. Take thee to Persia with all its gems and jewels, and thou dost suit the monarch on his throne; or take thee to the naked savage with all his poverty and squalid filth, and thou dost suit him too. Thou mayst he preached, thrice glorious wisdom of God, to the wisest of men; but thou are not too great a mystery to be understood and believed even by the fools and the babes; the things which are not can receive thee as well as the things which are. Never, I pray you brethren, lose heart in the power of the gospel. Do not believe that there exists any man, much less any race of

men, for whom the gospel is not fitted. Wherever you go, do not cut, and trim, and shape, and alter; hut just bring out the whole truth as God has taught it to you, and rest assured that you will be unto God a sweet savor of Christ in every place, both in them who are saved and in them who perish.

What then, was this gospel which the apostle Paul did preach everywhere? Well, it was a gospel which had in it three things, *certain facts*, *certain doctrines*, and *certain commands*.

It was a *gospel of facts*. Every time Paul stood up to preach he told the following unvarnished tale: God, looking upon the race of men, beheld them lost and ruined. Out of love to them he sent his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the virgin Mary, lived some thirty-two or thirty-three years a life of spotless innocence and perfect obedience to God. He was God: he was man. In due time he was delivered up by the traitor Judas. He was crucified, and actually put to death. Though he was the Lord of life and glory, who only hath immortality, yet he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. After three days he rose again, and showed himself to many of his disciples, so that they were well assured he was the same person who had been put into the grave; and when the forty days were finished he ascended up to heaven in the sight of them all, where he sitteth at the right hand of God, and shall also come ere long a second time to judge both the quick and the dead. These were the facts which Paul would state. God was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the father, full of grace and truth. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Briefly, these were the facts which Paul would preach, and if any one of these facts he preached doubtfully, or he left out of any ministry, then the gospel is not preached; for the foundations upon which the gospel rests have been removed, and then what can the righteous do?

Following upon these facts, Paul preached *certain doctrines*, the doctrines flowing out of the facts. To wit, he preached that Jesus Christ had offered a full atonement to divine wrath for the sin of his people, so that whosoever would believe on him, and trust him, should be saved. The doctrine of the atonement would form the most prominent feature in the gospel of the apostle Paul, Christ also hath suffered for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." Then would come the doctrine of pardon. Paul with glowing tongue would tell how God could be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth; how all manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men, the simple condition being that the man believes in Christ, and this not so much the man's own work, as a gift of the Holy Ghost. Everywhere Paul would he unmistakable in this—"Ye chief of sinners, look to the wounds of Jesus, and your sins shall he forgiven you." Equally clear would he be upon the doctrine of justification. "Christ," he would say, "will wash you; nay, more, he will clothe you; the perfect holiness of his character shall he imputed unto you, and being justified, you shall have peace with God, and there shall be no condemnation, because you are in Christ Jesus." I think I see the flashing eye of the apostle; methinks I listen to his earnest voice, while he pleads with men to lay hold upon eternal life, to look to Jesus Christ, to forsake the deeds of the law, to put their trust in nothing which cometh from man, but to look to Jesus, and to Jesus only. These great truths, atonement, pardon, and justification, with all the other truths connected with them, of which we cannot now speak particularly, were just the gospel which the apostle Paul preached.

And out of these we said their sprung *certain commands*. The commands were these—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Nor do I suppose that the apostle for a moment stammered to preach that other command—"Arise, and he baptized." He would not preach half the

gospel, but the whole of it—“He that believeth and is baptized shall he saved; but he that believeth not shall he damned;” and often after his hearers had cried, “What must we do to be saved,” and they had believed in Christ, they would say to him—“See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?”

The apostle then preached a gospel which was made up of certain authenticated facts, out of which there flowed certain most gracious evangelical doctrines, which were enforced and driven home with divine authority, by Christ’s own commands. “Well,” says one, “do you think the world will be turned upside down by this?” Sirs, it has been, and it will be again. In vain do those who seek after human learning, and who aim at dreamy sentiment or spurious science in preference to the standard teaching which is from above, attempt to find a nobler instrument. This is the great battering-ram which shall yet shake the bastions of error. This is the sword, the true Escalabar, which, if any man knoweth how to wield it, shall cut through joints and marrow, and make him more than a conqueror. He who getteth a hold of the gospel of Christ, and knoweth how to use it, hath that before which the devils tremble, and in the presence of which angels adore, which cherubs long to look into, and which God himself smiles upon as his noblest work. The truth we proclaim is not that which is discovered by us, but that which has been delivered to us. Do ye ask, then, where this man’s faith came from? It came from Paul’s preaching of the gospel.

II. Now WHEREIN LAY THIS MAN’S FAITH?

Paul looked at the man, we are told, and perceived “*that he had faith to be healed.*” What meaneth this “faith to be healed?” In this man’s case I think it was something like this. Poor fellow! As he listened to Paul’s preaching, he thought perhaps—“Well, that looks like true; that seems to be the truth; it is the truth; I am sure it is true; and, if it is true that Jesus Christ is so great a Savior, perhaps I may be healed; these lame legs of mine, which never would carry me anywhere, may yet come straight; I—I—I think they may; I hope they may; I believe they may; I know it can be done if Christ wills it; I believe that, and from what Paul says of Christ’s character, I think he must be willing to do it; I will ask the apostle; the first convenient season that I have I will lift up my cry, for I believe it can be done, and I think there is a perfect willingness, both in the mind of the apostle and of the Master that it should be done; I believe it will be done, and that I shall yet stand upright.” Then Paul said to him, “Stand upright on thy feet,” and he did so in a moment, for “he had faith to be healed.”

Do you think I am overstraining the probabilities of the case? You will perhaps say, “It does not appear that Paul had any communication with the poor cripple before the miracle was performed.” Now I venture to draw quite an opposite inference. I know from my own experience that it is no uncommon thing for some one individual to arrest the preacher’s attention. The group of countenances which lay before him in a large assembly like the present, might to the first glance of a stranger look confused and inexplicable, as a Chinese grammar does to those who know not the language. But you need not doubt that a practiced eye can learn to read the one as well as the other. The languor and indifference of some; the curious enquiring look of others; the cold, critical attention of a considerable number, and the countenances of those who are rather absorbed in a train of thought just awakened in their own minds—these have all a peculiar impressiveness, and form a picture which often reacts upon us, and kindles a vehement desire in our breasts to reach the souls of those who, for a brief hour, hang upon our lips. But there will sometimes be one who has faith dazzling in his very eyes, as they are fixed with an intentness, of which it were vain for me to attempt a description, seeming to drink in every word and every syllable of a word, till the

preacher becomes as absorbed in that man as the man had been in the preacher. And while he pursues the discourse, gaining liberty at every step, till he forgets the formality of the pulpit in the freedom of conversation with the people, he perceives that at last this man has heard the very truth which meets his case. There is no concealing it. His features have suddenly relaxed. He listens still, but it is no longer with painful anxiety; a calm satisfaction is palpable on his face now. That soul of communion which is in the eye has unravelled the secret. Preacher and hearer, unknown to all the rest of the audience, have secretly saluted each other, and met on the common ground of a vital faith. The anxious one feels that it can be done. And I can readily conclude that the apostle perceived that feeling with greater certainty than he would have done had the man whispered it in his ears. So have I sometimes known that the exhortation to believe has become from these lips a positive command to the struggling conscience of some one, who has been brought to a point where the remedy is instantly applied, and the cure instantly effected.

Most unquestionably there is such a thing as faith to be saved. I do not know how many here may possess it; but, thank God, there are hundreds of you here who have faith that *you are* saved. That is better; that is the ripest faith, the faith which knows you are saved and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Alas! there are others who have no faith at all. But it is with those who have faith, and that only faith *to be* saved, not faith that *you are* saved, I am more particularly concerned at this moment.

Shall I describe this “faith to be saved?” for I believe that there may be some here who may just now stand upright on their feet; some who may at this time leap for joy of heart because they are saved and did not know it. You have “faith,” but you have not fully exercised it. Now, you believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Son? “Yes.” That he has made a full atonement for his people? “Yes.” You believe that they are his people who trust him? “Yes.” You believe he is worthy to be trusted? “Yes.” You have nothing else to trust to? “No, sir.” You depend on nothing which you have ever felt, or thought, or done? “No, sir, I depend on nothing but Christ.” And you do, after a sort of fashion, trust Christ. You hope that one of these days he will save you, and you think, and sometimes you almost know, he will. You are ready to trust him. You do believe he is able, you do not think he is unwilling; you have got faith in his ability, and you have almost got faith in his willingness; sometimes you half think to yourself, “I am a child of God.” But then, there is some ugly “but” comes in. Those lame legs again; those lame legs again. You are still afraid. You have “faith to be saved,” but you have not the full assurance of faith which can utter forth this joyous psalm, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.”

Well now, I do not know whether I have picked you out, whether I have given a right description of you or not. I recollect the time when I was in that state. I can honestly say I did not doubt Christ. I then partly believed that he would save me. I knew he was worthy of my trust, and I did trust him as far as this, that I resolved, if I did perish, I would perish crying to him, and that if I was east away, it should be clinging to the cross. I believe I had “faith to be saved,” and was for months in bondage, when there was no necessity that I should have been in bondage at all, for, when there is “faith to be saved,” then the man only needs that gracious command—“Stand upright on thy feet,” and forthwith he leaps out of his infirmity, and walks freely in the integrity of his heart.

III. I shall not enlarge further upon this, because I want to go to THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE MIRACLE, AND OF THE BLESSING CONFERRED.

Are there not many, who though they have “faith to be saved,” are still entirely lame or painfully limping? The reasons may be different in different cases. Some have been so stunned by the grief which they have suffered on account of sin, and the frightful convictions through which they have passed, that while they do believe that Christ is able and willing to save, they cannot get a hold of the fact that they are saved; such is the faintness of spirit and the languishing of soul brought on by long despair. “Stand upright on thy feet,” thou trembling sinner. If thou believest in Jesus, whatever thy fears may be, there is no cause for them. As for thy sins, they were laid on him, every one of them, and though thou hast been sore broken in the land of dragons, thus saith the Lord unto thee, “I have put away thy sin; thou shalt not die; I have blotted out like a cloud thy transgressions, and like a thick cloud thy sins.” Rejoice, then, and be glad. If you do trust Christ, you are saved; though as yet it only looketh like faith which heralds the tidings of a salvation which has not yet arrived. Still, it is the grace of God which bringeth salvation which has enabled thee to believe; and he who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. O receive the welcome message; spring up at the sound of the words; stand upright on thy feet and rejoice.

Some are still lame, though they have faith, *through ignorance*. They do not know what being saved is. They entertain wrong expectations. They are trusting in Christ, but they do not feel any surprising emotions; they have not had any remarkable dreams, or visions, or striking ebullitions of excited joy, and therefore, though they have “faith to be saved,” they have not the faith of a present salvation. They are waiting for something, they hardly know what, to embellish their faith, or to fortify it with signs and wonders. Now, poor soul, wherefore do you wait? These things are not necessary to salvation. In fact, the fewer you have of them, methinks, the better, especially of things which are visionary. I rather tremble for those who talk much about sensible evidences; they are too often the frivolities of unstable hearts. Beloved, though you may have never had any ecstatic joys, or suffered any deep depression of your spirits, if you are resting on Christ, it does not matter one whit what your feelings have been or have not been. Do you expect to have an electric shock, or to go through some mysterious operation? The operation is mysterious, too mysterious for you to discern it; but all that you have to do with is this—“Do I believe in Jesus? Am I simply depending upon him for everything?” If you do you are saved, and I pray you to believe this. Stand upright on your feet, and leap for joy; for whether you believe it or not, if you are now depending upon Christ, your sins are forgiven you; you are a child of God; you are an heir of heaven.

How many, too, are kept lame because of a *fear of self-deception*. “I do trust Christ, but I am afraid lest I should deceive myself; suppose I were to get confidence, and it should be presumption! suppose I should think myself saved, and I am not!” Now, sir, if thou wert dealing with thyself there would be reason to be afraid of presumption, but thy faith hath to deal with God, who cannot deceive thee, and with Christ who will never tempt thee to be a deceiver. Doth not the Lord Jesus Christ himself tell thee that if thou believest in him thou art saved? Thou believest that, dost thou not? Then, soul, if thou believest on him, it is not presumption to say, “I am saved.” Away with all that affectation of modesty, which some good people think to be so pretty—saying, “I hope;” “I trust;” but “I feel such doubts, such fears, and such gloomy misgivings.” My dear sir, that is not humility: that is a vain unseemly questioning of God. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ tells you, and he gives his own unequivocal word for it, that if you rest upon Christ you rest upon a rock; that if you believe in him you are not condemned. Is it an evidence of the lowliness of your heart that you suspect the veracity of God, or the faithfulness of his promise? Surely this were no fruit of the meekness of wisdom. No, beloved; it may seem too good to be true, but it is not too

good for my God to give, though it is too good for you to receive. You have his word for it, that if you trust his Son to save you, and simply trust him, and him alone, even if the pillars of the heavens should shake, yet you would be saved. If the foundations of the earth should reel, and the whole earth should like a vision pass away, yet this eternal promise and oath of God must stand fast.

Others again, cannot stand upright on their feet, because they are afraid that *if they did begin they would go back again, and so bring dishonor to Christ*. This would be a very proper fear if you had anything to do with keeping yourselves. If you had to carry yourselves to heaven, it would be reasonable enough for you to despair of doing it. Of your own impotence it is impossible you can be too deeply convinced. You cannot do anything whatever, but Christ gives you his promise to preserve you even to the end. If you believe on him you shall be saved. He does not say you shall be saved for a year, or for twenty years, and then, perhaps, he lost at last. No; but “he that believeth and is baptized, shall he saved.” If one man who believes in Christ is cast away, that promise of Christ is not true. Brethren, it is true, and it must be true, and let its glorious truth be sweetly familiar with you now—if you give your soul to Christ, putting simple faith in his person as the Son of God, and in his work as the Mediator between God and man, you shall as surely see his face within the pearly gates of heaven as your eyes see me to-night. There may be a question about your seeing me, but there can be no question about Christ fulfilling his promise and keeping his word. Now sit down in the dust no longer, thou doubting, mourning, trembling sinner. With a loud voice I say unto thee, as Paul did, “*Stand upright on thy feet.*” Wherefore dost thou mourn? There is nothing to mourn about. Thy sin is forgiven; thine eternal salvation is secure; a crown in heaven is provided for thee, and a harp of gold awaits thee. If thou believest in Jesus none can lay anything to thy charge. Not even the principalities of darkness shall be able to prevail against thee. Eternal love secures thee against the malice of hell. Stand upright, then, on thy feet, for if thou believest thou art saved, completely saved, saved in time, and for eternal days, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Then possibly there is one here who cannot stand upright *because of his many sins*. Ah! while I have been talking about Christ it may be something has been saying in your heart, “Ah! ah! what is it? Christ taking men’s sins, suffering in their stead? That suits me. Is God doing this? Ah! then he must be able to save, and I am told that whosoever trusteth in him shall never perish; is it so? Why, here I am; I who have not been in a place of worship for months, for years, I have strayed in here to-night, and if what this man says be true, well then I will even venture my soul upon it; I have got nothing, I know, but he says there is nothing wanted; I am not prepared to trust Christ, but he says there is no preparation required, and if I trust Jesus Christ just as I am, Christ will save me; why, I will do it; by the grace of God I will do it; can he save me?” Then comes in the bitter reflection—“Look what a sinner I have been! why, I should be ashamed to say how foully I have sinned; he must shut me out; I have been too great a villain, too gross an offender; I have cursed and sworn at such a rate; he cannot mean that if I trust Christ I shall be saved; I believe he can save me; I see the fitness of the plan, and the excellency of it; I believe it, but see what a sinner I am!” Sinner, stand upright on thy feet, for “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Return, thou wanderer, return to thy Father’s house! He comes to meet thee. On thy neck he will fall, and thou shalt be his child for ever. Only believe thou in his Son Jesus Christ, and though this be the first time thou hast ever heard his Word, I would settle mine eyes upon thee earnestly, and say, “Stand upright on thy feet.”

Oh! how often I do wish that somebody had come to me when I was under depression of mind, and had told me about the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. I think I should have stood upright on my feet long before I did, but, alas! I kept hearing about what people felt before they believed in Christ—very proper preaching—and I was afraid I did not feel it, though now I know I did. I heard a great deal about what Christians ought to be, and a great deal more about God's elect, what they are in his esteem, but I did not know whether I was one of God's elect, and I knew I was not what I ought to be. O for the trumpet of the archangel, to sound the words, "*Believe and live,*" as loud as the voice which shall wake the dead in their graves! and O for the quickening Spirit to go with voice, as it shall go with the ringing of the archangel's trump, when the graves shall open, and the dead shall arise! Go, you who know it, and tell it everywhere, for there are multitudes, I doubt not, who are really seeking Christ, and who have his Spirit in them, but it is like as the prophet hath it, "The children have come to the birth and there is no strength to bring forth." They have come to the very edge of light, and they only want one helping hand to bring them into noonday. They are slipping about in the Slough of Despond, and they are almost out of it, but they want just a helping hand to pull them out. This hand of help is stretched out by thus telling them, telling them plainly, it is in Jesus their help is found, and that trusting him, relying upon him, they shall never perish. neither shall any pluck them out of his hand.

I would to God that some of you, who have been long hearing me, might be found in this class. I have been bowed down in spirit at some sad things which have been brought to my hearing of late. I know that there are some here, and there always have been some few attending my ministry, who have a personal affection for me, and who listen to the Word with very great attention, and who, moreover, are very greatly moved by it, but who have some besetting sin which they either cannot or will not give up. They do renounce it for a time, but either bad associates, or else the strength of their passions, take them away again. O sirs! I would ye would take warning. There was one of whom we had some sort of hope, who listened to our ministry. There came a turning point with him; it was this, either that he must give up sin, or else give up coming to the Tabernacle; and what—oh! what became of him? I could indicate the place where he sat. *He died of delirium tremens!* And I do not wonder. When you have heard the gospel preached Sabbath after Sabbath, when your response to the solemn appeals you have earnestly listened to has only been that you reject Christ and refuse eternal life—is it any marvel that in making the choice of your own damnation reason should resign its seat as director of your actions, and cease to curb your headstrong will, leaving the maddened passions to dash on with reckless fury, and precipitate your destruction. Am I clear of their blood? I have asked myself the question. I may not be in some things, but I know I am as far as my ministry is concerned. I have not shunned to declare unto any of you the whole counsel of God. When I have known any vice, or any folly—which of you have I been afraid of, or before whom of you all have I trembled? God is my witness; him have I served in the spirit; and if these turn aside unto their crooked ways, they have not done it without well knowing the consequences; nay, they have not done it without being warned and entreated, and persuaded to look unto Jesus Christ. And I do conjure some of you—you know to whom I refer—I do conjure those of you who have a conscience which is not seared, but who, nevertheless, persevere in your sins—I conjure you by the love of God, do me this one favor at the last: if you choose your own ruin, bear witness for me that I have not hesitated to warn you of it. I had infinitely rather, however, that you would do yourselves this great favor, to love your own souls. If you have anything to throw into the fire, throw it in, but let it not be your soul. If you have anything to lose, go and lose it, but do not lose

your soul. Sirs, if you must play the fool, indulge your sport at a cheaper rate than this. If sin be worth having, then I pray you pay a cheaper price than your own souls for it, for it does seem to me so pitiful, so sorrowful a thing, that you who have been so short a time among us and are passing away before my very eyes, should still prefer the fleeting joy of the moment to the eternal joy, and risk everlasting torment for temporary mirth. By the tears of Jesus when he wept over Jerusalem, by the blood of Jesus which he shed for guilty men, by the heart of the eternal Father who willeth not the death of a sinner but had rather that he should turn unto him and live, I pray you he wise and consider your ways. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, and may the Lord guide your choice. May you fall into the arms of divine mercy and say, "If thou wilt help me, Jesus, here I am; I give myself to thee." May my Master teach me how to address you if I do not know how to gasp the words of simplicity, tenderness, of terrible apprehension, but of persuasive power. If there were any words in any language that would melt you, this tongue is at your service to utter them. If there is any form of speech, though it should make me to be called vulgar, and subject me to the shame and hissing which once I endured, if the furnace could be heated seven times hotter than that, I would but laugh at it if I might but win your souls. Tell me, sirs, how shall I put the case? Would you have argument? I wish that I could reason with you. Would you have tears? There, let them flow! Ye dry eyes, why do ye not weep more for these perishing souls? Would you have God's Word without my word? Sirs, I would read it, and let my tongue be dumb if that would teach you. Would my death save you? That God who seeth in secret knoweth that to-night it were a joy to me to enter into my rest, and so it were little for me to talk of being willing to give a life for you, and it were, indeed, but a trifle to me. Oh! why will ye perish? Why should I plead with you, and you not care for yourselves? What is it that besets you? Poor moths! Are ye dazzled with the flames? Are ye not content to have singed your wings? Must they also consume body and soul? How can ye make your bed in hell? How can ye abide with eternal burnings? In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I command you—for I can do no less—I command you to turn unto him and live. Believe on him and you shall be saved. But remember, at your hazard you reject the message to-night. It may be the last message that shall ever come to your soul with power, if ye cast this away—

"What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who slight the bonds of love?"

I would have you saved just now. I cannot talk about to-morrow. I would have you decide it at once. Oh! you have come as far as this twenty times, and have you gone back again? You have been aroused, you have made vows and you have broken them, resolutions and you have belied them. O sirs, for God's sake do not lie to the Almighty again. Now be true this time. May the Spirit of God make you speak the truth, even though you should be compelled to say, through your wickedness, "I will not submit myself unto the Son of God." Do speak the truth. Procrastinate not. As Elijah said, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" so say I. If God he God serve him, but if Baal he God serve him. But do not keep on coming here and then going to the pot-house. Do not come and take your seat here and then go to the brothel. Sirs, do not this foul scandal for God's sake, and for your own sake. If you will serve the devil serve him, and he a true servant to him. If you mean to go to hell, go there; but if you seek eternal life and joys to come, give up these things. Renounce them. Why drink poison and drink medicine too? Have done with one or the other and be honest. Be honest to your own souls. May the Lord grant that tonight some may have given to them, not only "faith to *be* saved," but the faith which saves, for his name's sake. Amen.

Christ is Glorious—Let Us Make Him Known

A Sermon

(No. 560)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 20th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”—Micah 5:4.

YOU HAVE A VERY VIVID IDEA of the sufferings of Christ. Your faith has seen him sweating great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane. You have looked on with amazement while he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them who plucked off the hair, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. With sorrowful sympathy you have followed him through the streets of Jerusalem, weeping and bewailing him with the women. You have sat down to watch him when he was fastened to the tree; you have wept at his bitter complaint—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and you have rejoiced in his shout of victory—“It is finished!” With Magdalene and Nicodemus, you have followed his dead body to the tomb, and seen it wrapped about with spices, and left to its lonely sleep. Are your perceptions quite as keen concerning the glory which *did* follow and *is* following? Can you see him quite as distinctly when on the third morn the Conqueror rises, bursting the bonds of death with which he could not be holden? Can you as clearly view him ascending up on high, leading captivity captive? Can you hear the ring of angelic clarions, as with dyed garments from Bozrah the Victor returns from the battle, dragging death and hell at his chariot wheels? Do you plainly perceive him as he takes his seat at the right hand of the Father, henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his footstool? And can you be as clear this morning about the reigning Christ as you have been about the suffering Christ? Lo! my brethren, “the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, *hath* prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof!” At this hour he goeth forth, riding upon his white horse, conquering and to conquer. Lo! at his girdle swing the keys of heaven, and death, and hell, for “the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” Behold him, my brethren, in his present plenitude of glory, and endeavor to get as clear a perception of it as you have had of his shame. Not only weep at his burial, but rejoice at his resurrection; not only sorrow at his cross, but worship at his throne. Do not merely think of the nails and of the spear, but behold the imperial purple which hangs so nobly upon his royal shoulders, and of the divine crown which he wears upon his majestic brow.

I want to conduct you in such a frame of mind through the glories of my text. First, bidding you observe *the perpetual reign of Christ*: “He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God;” then I shall beg you to observe that flowing from this is *the perpetual continuance of his church*: “and they shall abide;” and then proceeding both from his continued reign and from the Church’s consequent perpetual existence comes *the greatness of our King*: “for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.”

I. At the outset, observe carefully THE PERPETUAL REIGN OF CHRIST. He lives, he reigns, he is king over his people.

Notice first, that his reign is *shepherd-like in its nature*. The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but our Master washed his disciples' feet. Earthly monarchs are often tyrants; their yoke is heavy, and their language domineering; but it is not so with our King; his yoke is easy, and his burden is light, for he is meek and lowly of heart. He is a shepherd-king. He has supremacy, but it is the superiority of a wise and tender shepherd over his needy and loving flock; he commands and receives obedience, but it is the willing obedience of the well-cared-for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved Shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the force of love and the energy of goodness. His power lies not in imperious threatenings, but in imperial lovingkindness. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King, for "men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." Never people had such a king before. His service is perfect freedom; to be his subject is to be a king; to serve him is to reign. Blessed are the people who are the sheep of his pasture; if they follow in his footsteps their road is safe; if they sleep at his feet no lion can disturb their peace; if they are fed from his hand they shall lie down in green pastures, and know no lack; if they abide close to his person they shall drink of rivers of delight. Righteousness and peace are the stability of his throne, joy and gladness are the ornaments of his reign. Oh! how happy are we who belong to such a prince. Thou King in Jeshurun, we pay thee homage with loyal hearts; we come into thy presence with thanksgiving, and into thy courts with praise, for thou art our God, and we are the people of thy pasture, and the sheep of thy hand.

Notice that the reign of Jesus is *practical in its character*. It is said "he shall stand *and feed*." The great Head of the Church is actively engaged in providing for his people. He does not sit down upon the throne in empty state, or hold a scepter without wielding it in government. No, he stands and feeds. The expression "feed," in the original is like an analogous one in the Greek, which means to shepherdize, to do everything expected of a shepherd: to guide, to watch, to preserve, to tend, as well as to feed. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, is always actively engaged for the Church's good. Through him the Spirit of God constantly descends upon the members of the Church; by him ministers are given in due season, and all Church-officers in their proper place. When he ascended up on high he received gifts for men; "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Our Lord does not close his eyes to the state of his Church. Beloved, he is not a listless spectator of our wants. He is this day standing and feeding his people. They are scattered, I know, wide as the poles asunder, but our mighty Shepherd can see every sheep and lamb of his flock, and he gives them all their portion of meat in due season. He it is that like a mighty Breaker, goes forth at the head of his flock, and they follow where he clears the way, "He shall stand and feed." Oh! blessed carefulness and divine activity of our gracious King! always fighting against our enemies, and at the same the shedding his benignant influences upon his friends.

Consider again, for it is in our text, that this active reign is *continual in its duration*. It is said, "He shall stand and feed;" not "he shall feed now and then, and then leave his position;" not, "he shall one day grant a revival, and then next day leave his Church to barrenness." Beloved, there is no such pastor as Christ. "I know my sheep," he can say, in a very high and peculiar sense. He knows them through and through; he feels with them; in all their afflictions he is afflicted; he is one with them eternally. There is no such wakeful watchman as the Lord Jesus. Is it not written,

“I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Those eyes never slumber, and those hands never rest; that heart never ceases to beat with love, and those shoulders are never weary of carrying his people’s burdens. The Church may go through her dark ages, but Christ is with her in the midnight. She may pass through her fiery furnace, but Christ is in the midst of the flame with her. Her whole history through, wherever you find the Church, there shall you find the Church’s Lord. The head is never severed from the body, nor is the watchful care of this gracious husband towards his spouse suspended for an instant.

I beseech you labor to realize the noble picture. Here are his sheep in these pastures this morning, and here is our great Shepherd with the crown upon his head, standing and feeding us all; nay, not *us* all alone, but dispensing his tender mercies to all the multitudes of his elect throughout the whole world. He is at this moment King in Zion, ruling, and overruling, present everywhere, and everywhere showing himself strong in the defense of his saints. I would that our Churches could be more influenced by a belief in the abiding power, presence, and pre-eminence of their living and reigning Lord. He is no dead King whose memory we are bidden to embalm, but a living Leader and Commander whose behests we must obey, whose honor we must defend.

Do not fail to discern that the empire of Christ in his Church is *effectually powerful in its action*; “He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah.” Wherever Christ is, there is God; and whatever Christ does is the act of the Most High. Oh! it is a joyful truth to consider that he who redeemed us was none other than God himself, he who led our captivity captive was Jehovah-Jesus; he who stands to-day representing the interests of his people is very God of very God, he who has sworn that every one of his people whom he hath redeemed by blood shall be brought safe to his Father’s right hand, is himself essential Deity. O my brethren, we rest upon a sure foundation when we build upon the Incarnate God; and O ye saints of God, the interests of each one of you, and of the one great Church, must be safe, because our champion is God; Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King, he will save us. How can he fail or be discouraged? When he maketh bare his arm, who shall stand against him? Let us rehearse the mighty deeds of the Lord and tell of his wonders of old. Remember how he got him victory upon Pharaoh and the pride of Egypt! Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?” Ten plagues of terrible majesty taught the boaster that the Lord was not to be despised, and the humbled tyrant bade the people go their way. With a high hand and an outstretched arm did the Lord bring forth his people from the house of bondage. When the proud high stomach of Egypt’s king again rose against the Most High, the Lord knew how to lay his adversary lower than the dust. Methinks I see the hosts of Mizraim, with their horses and their chariots, hurrying after the Lord’s fugitives. Their mouths are foaming with rage. “The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them.” See how they ride in all their pompous glory, swallowing the earth in their fury. O Israel, where shall be thy defense? How shalt thou escape from thy tyrannic master? Be still, O ye seed of Jacob; ye sons of Abraham, rest ye patiently, for these Egyptians whom ye see to-day, ye shall see no more for ever. With their horses and their chariots the fierce foemen descended into the depths of the sea, but the Lord looked upon them, and troubled them. “Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” The depths have covered them; they sank into the bottom like a stone. “Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” Surely it shall be so at the last with Jesus our King, and all his saints; we also shall sing “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb,” in that day when the arch-enemy shall be overthrown, and

the hosts of evil shall be consumed, and they who hate the Lord shall become as the fat of rams, into smoke shall they consume, yea, into smoke shall they consume away.

One other word remains; our Lord's kingdom *is most majestic in its aspect*. You will observe it is written by the prophet—"He shall feed in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God." Jesus Christ is greatly to be revered; the familiarity with which we approach him is always to be tempered with the deepest and most reverent adoration. He is our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, but still he counteth it not robbery to be equal with God. I know he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and he calleth himself to-day our husband, and maketh us to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; but yet we must never forget that it is written, "Let all the angels of God worship him," and "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Yes, Christ is majestic in his Church. I would, brethren, we always thought of this. There is a glory and a majesty about all the laws of Christ, and all his commands, so that whether we baptize at his command, or break bread in remembrance of him, or lift up his cross in ministry—in whatever we do, in his name, which is in fact, what he does through us, there is an attendant majesty which should make our minds feel perpetually reverent before him. O that the world could see the glory of Christ in the Church! O that the world did but know who it is that is in the midst of the few, the feeble, the weak, the foolish as they call them. O Philistia! if thou didst but know who is our champion, thy Goliath of Gath would soon hide his diminished head. O Assyria, if thou didst but know that the ancient might of him who smote Sennacherib, still abideth with us, thy hosts would turn their backs and yield us an easy victory. There is a true and mysterious presence of Christ with his people, according to the promise "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" it is because the world ignores this that she despises and sneers at the Church of God. Therein is our comfort and our glory. We have a majesty about us if we be the people of God, which is not to be gainsayed; angels see it and wonder—a majesty of indwelling Godhead, for the Lord is in the midst of us for a glory and around us for a defense.

II. We will now occupy one or two minutes with THE CONSEQUENT PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH. Because of the unseen but most certain presence of Christ as King in the midst of his people, his Church ABIDES—so says the text. Here reflect first that a Church *exists*. What a wonder this! It is perhaps, the greatest miracle of all ages that God has a Church in the world. You who are conversant with human history will hear me out when I say that the whole history of the Church is a series of miracles, a long stream of wonders! A little spark kindled in the midst of oceans, and yet all her boisterous waves cannot quench it! Here is the great wonder which John saw in vision, and which history reveals in solemn, sober fact. A woman, "being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon . . . stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." The man-child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, was brought forth and caught up to God and to his throne. As for the woman, the Church, she fled as on eagles' wings to her wilderness-shelter prepared of God, until, in great wrath, the dragon pursued and persecuted her. Apt enough is that metaphor, "The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood . . . And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Yet, my brethren, as surely

as that glorious man-child, the Lord Jesus, lives and sits upon the throne, so surely shall the woman, the poor afflicted Church, live on until the dragon's time is over, and the King shall reign upon the earth.

To what trials, my brethren, has not the Church of God been subjected? What new invention can Satan bring forth? The fire, the rack, imprisonment, banishment, confiscation, slander, all these have been tried, and in them all the Church has been more than conqueror through him who loved her. False doctrine without, heresy and schism with in, hypocrisy, formalism, fanaticism, pretences of high spirituality, worldliness, these have all (lone their worst. I marvel at the wondrous ingenuity of the great enemy of the Church, but methinks his devices must nearly have come to an end. Can he invent anything further? We have been astounded in these ages by the prodigy of an infidel bishop; we have been struck dumb with sorrow and amazement at a decree which declares that a Church professing to be a Church of Christ must permit men to be her ministers who deny the inspiration of Holy Scripture. This is a new thing under the sun. Popery and infidelity are to be both legalized and fostered in a Church professing to be Christian and Protestant. What next? and what next? Bat what of all this? *The Church*, I mean the company of the Lord's called and faithful and chosen still exists; the Lord has his elect people who still hold forth the Word of truth, and in the most reprobate Church still he may say, "I hay e a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

Observe, the text says, "she abides," which means, not that she exists now and then by starts and spasms, but *she exists always*. This is wonderful! Always a Church! When the full force of the Pagan Emperors came like a thundering avalanche upon her, she shook off the stupendous load as a man shaketh the flakes of snow from his garment, and she lived on uninjured. When papal Rome vented its malice yet more furiously and ingeniously; when cruel murderers hunted the saints among the Alps, or worried them in the low country; when Albigenses and Waldenses poured out their blood in rivers, and dyed the snow with crimson, she lived still, and never was in a healthier state than when she was immersed in her own gore. When after a partial reformation in this country, the pretenders to religion determined that the truly spiritual should be harried out of the land, God's Church did not sleep or suspend her career of life or service. Let the covenant signed in blood witness to the vigor of the persecuted saints. Harken to her psalm amidst the brown heath-clad hills of Scotland, and her prayer in the secret conventicles of England. Hear ye the voice of Cargil and Cameron thundering among the mountains against a false king and an apostate people; hear ye the testimony of Bunyan and his compeers who would sooner rot in dungeons than bow the knee to Baal. Ask me "Where is the Church?" and I can find her at any and every period from the day when first in the upper room the Holy Ghost came down even until now. In. one unbroken line our apostolic succession runs; not through the Church of Rome; not from the superstitious hands of priest-made popes, or king-created bishops, (what a varnished lie is the apostolic succession of those who boast so proudly of it!) but through the blood of good men and true, who never forsook the testimony of Jesus; through the loins of true pastors, laborious evangelists, faithful martyrs, and honorable men of God, we trace our pedigree up to the fishermen of Galilee and glory that we perpetuate by God's grace that true and faithful Church of the living God, in whom Christ did abide and will abide until the world's crash.

Observe, dear friends, that in the use of the term "*Abide*," we have not only existence, and continued existence, but the idea of *quiet, calm, uninjured duration*. It does not say she lingers, hunted, tempted, worried, but she abides. Ohm! the calmness of the Church of God under the attacks

of her most malicious foes. Thou cruel adversary, the virgin daughter of Zion hath shaken her head at thee and laughed thee to scorn! She abides in peace when the world rages against her. It is most noteworthy how in most instances the Church of God still keeps her foothold where she has been most savagely persecuted. In modern times we find in Madagascar, after years of exterminating persecution, the Church of God rises from her ashes, like the phoenix from the flames. The chief wonder is that she abides perfect. Not one of God's elect has gone back; not one of the blood-bought has denied the faith. Not one single soul which ever was effectually called can be made to dolly Christ, even though his flesh should be pulled from his bones by hot pincers, or his tormented body flung to the jaws of wild beasts. All that the enemy has done has been of no avail against the Church. The old rock has been washed, and washed, and washed again by stormy waves, and submerged a thousand times in the floods of tempest, but even her angles and corners abide unaltered and unalterable. We may say of the Lord's tabernacle, not one of its stakes thereof has been removed, nor one of its cords broken. The house of the Lord from foundation to pinnacle is perfect still: "The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house and it fell not;" nay, nor a single stone of it "for it was founded upon a rock."

But why all this, dear friends, why is it that we have seen the Church endure to this day? How is it that we are confident that even should worse times arrive, the Church would weather the storm and abide till moons shall cease to wax and wane? Why this security? Only because Christ is in the midst of her. You do not believe, I hope, in the preservation of orthodoxy by legal instruments and trust deeds. This is what too many Dissenters have relied upon. We certainly cannot depend upon creeds; they are good enough in their way, as trust deeds are too, but they are as broken reeds if we rely upon them. We cannot depend upon parliament, nor kings, nor queens. We may draw up the most express and distinct form of doctrine, but we shall find that the next generation will depart from the truth unless God shall be pleased to give it renewed grace from on high. You cannot, by Presbytery, or Independency, or Episcopacy, secure the life of the Church—I find the Church of God has existed under an Episcopacy—a form of government not without its virtues and its faults. I find the Church of God flourish under a Presbytery, and decay under it too. I know it can be successful under an Independent form of Church government and can decline into Arianism quite as easily. The fact is that forms of government have very little to do with the vital principle of the Church. The reason why the Church of God exists is not her ecclesiastical regulations, her organization, her formularies, her ministers, or her creeds, but the presence of the Lord in the midst of her; and while Christ lives, and Christ reigns, and stands and feeds his Church, she is safe; but if he were once gone, it would be with her as it is with you and with me when the Spirit of God has departed from us, we are weak as other men, and she would be quite as powerless.

III. But now, thirdly, flowing from both these, from the perpetual presence of Christ and from the continued existence of his Church, is THE GREATNESS OF OUR KING. "*Now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.*" Christ is great in his Church. Oh! how great in our hearts where he reigns supreme! My heart, it doth leap at the sound of his name—

"Jesus, the very thought of thee,
With rapture fills my breast."

O for crowns! for golden crowns! Let us crown him King in Zion! O for a well-tuned harp, and for David's feet, to dance before the ark at the very mention of Jesus' name! Now shall he be great indeed in our hearts! But he is to be great to the ends of the earth. That is a promise, of which we will say it is *accomplished in a measure even now*. Christ is made great in the conversion of every

sinner. When he suppliant penitent cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and the peace-speaking blood comes dropping upon the troubled conscience, and the soul bows meekly to accept he finished righteousness, then is Christ great. And he is great in the consecration of every one of his bloodbought saints; when they live for him; when in their prayers they make mention of him; when they give him their heart's music, their life's light, and their lips' testimony; when they feel that tribulation is joyous if endured for him, and the sternest toil a dear delight when undertaken for his sake—then Christ is great. Think, my brethren, this morning, how many ships are now furrowing the blue sea in which there are hearts which love the name of Jesus. Hark! across the waves of the Atlantic and the Pacific I hear the sound of prayer and praise from many a vessel bearing the British flag. From many an islet of the sea the song is borne upon the breeze. And there across the waters in the land of our American brethren, now so sadly chastened with war, multitudes of hearts beat as high as ours at the mention of the Savior's name. Here across you narrow Channel, in Holland, in Sweden, in Germany, in Switzerland, and even in France and Italy, how many own his name and praise him this day! We speak of our Queen's dominions and say that the sun never sets upon them. We may in truth say this of our Lord Jesus; men of all colors trust in his blood; they who look upward to the southern cross and they who follow the Polar star, alike worship his dear name; and when England ceases her strain of joy, in the hush of night, Australia takes up the song, and so from land to land, and from shore to shore, a sacrifice of a pure offering is brought to his shrine. It is accomplished, in some degree, but oh! how small the degree when we think of the thick darkness which covers the multitude of the people.

Again, it is a promise which is *guaranteed as to its fulfillment in the fullest sense*. Courage! brethren, courage! the night is not for ever, the morning cometh! Watchman, what sayest thou? Are there not streaks reddening the east? Hath not the God of day, the Lord Jesus, began to shoot his divine arrows of light upwards into the thick darkness? It is even so. As I think of the signs of the times, I would fondly hope that we shall live to see brighter and better days. "Now," says the text, "shall he be great unto the ends of the earth." Prophet, I would that thy "now" were true this day. Now, even now, let him reign! why doth he tarry? Why are his chariots so long in coming? Will it be, my brethren, that Christ will come before the world is converted? If so, welcome Jesus. Or will the world be converted first? If so, thrice welcome the mercy. But whether or no, this we do know, he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth. They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The day shall come when the fifth great monarchy shall be co-extensive with the world's bounds, and everywhere the Great Shepherd shall reign.

But remember, dear friends, that while this promise is thus guaranteed as to its fulfillment, it is to be *prayed for as to its accomplishment*. "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." The mountain of the Lord shall be in the latter days, but mark you, though there be no sound of trowel or a hammer, there will be heard be sound of prayer and praise, as upward the mountain of God's house shall ascend. You know the picture. The prophet had seen the Lord's house standing, as it were, in a valley, and as he looked upon it, presently it became a little hill; the ground began to heave; by-and-by it had swollen from a little hill into a lofty mountain, and up it rose, and grew more great before his eyes, till Alps were dwarfed and Himalayas were stunted, and up it still went, not the house only, but the mountain too, till infinitely higher than the projected tower of Babel, which man meant to be the world's center, this house stood out clear and sharp above the clouds, having pinnacles high up in God's heaven, and yet deep foundations in

man's earth, and all nations began to flow to it as to the great center. What a dream! What a vision! Yet such shall it be. The Church is as it were, in a plain just now, she begins to misc. Oh! stupendous movement! she begins to rise, her mountains swell and grow; she attracts observers; she cannot be held down. Who can attempt to restrain the swelling mass? Who shall prevent the gigantic birth? Up rises the mountain, as though swollen by some inward fire, anti up it swells, and swells, and swells, till earth touches heaven, and God communes with men. Then shah be heard the great hallelujah, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them."

But then, and this is the conclusion, and I hope God may help me to press it on your hearts. *All this is to be labored for* as well as prayed after. My soul pants and pines to see Christ glorious in the eyes of men. Lives there a Christian here with soul so dead that he does not desire the extension of his Master's kingdom? Sirs, is there one among you who counts it little to see Jesus Christ lifted up in men's hearts? I know I speak to a people—and the Lord knoweth it to many of whom Christ is he dearest of all which is beloved, the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Now, if Christ is to be glorified, he must be glorified by you; if his kingdom is to come, it must come through you. God works, but God works by means. He worketh in you "to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Souls are to be saved, but they are not saved without instruments. The feast is to be furnished with guests, but you are to go into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in. I know my Master is to have many crowns, but they are to be crowns for which you grace, and which you have fought, which you have won through his you place at his feet, that he may honor you by wearing them upon his brow. Now we, as a people, have been greatly blessed and helped of God, and I believe the Master has a very high claim upon us. We, above all the Churches in the world are indebted to the grace and mercy of God, and we ought to be doing something for the extension of the Savior's kingdom. We cannot boast of wealth; we cannot profess to build all over London a multitude of Churches as the Bishop hopes to do. Any scheme of raising three millions of money by us, must be looked upon as being entirely a dream; we cannot attempt such a thing; if London is to be converted by money we must give up the task. We have no mitred bishops, no queens to subscribe, and no nobles and dukes, and the like to add their thousands and their tens of thousands of pounds. We are a feeble folk; what then can we do for Cod? Why, do as much as the strong! What call we do for God? Do as munch as the mighty! Nay, my brethren, our very weakness and want of power shah be our adaptation to Cod's work; and he who often putteth by the sword of Saul, and the armor of the son of Kish, will use David, and his sling and his stone, and smite Goliath's brow therewith.

I have been musing all this week upon that celebrated scene in ancient history, which seems to me to be so much like the state of our Church just now; the story of Gideon, the son of Joash, threshing wheat in the winepress, because he was afraid to be seen; the Midianites having spoiled the land. Now we, as Baptists, have generally been too much afraid to be seen; we have threshed our corn somewhere away in the winepress—up a back court—down a narrow street; any dirty hole would do to build a chapel in; so long as people could not find it tine site was thought advantageous; and if nobody could ever see it that was the place for our fathers, and for some who still linger among us. It was threshing wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the enemy. Well now, I think the time has come that we should not be afraid of these Midianites any longer. Long has he Church of God been oppressed and kept back; she has been content to let the world devour liner increase. There have been few additions to the Churches; they remain very much what they were twenty or thirty years ago; but, my brethren, some of us think that we have seen our fleece wet with

dew, while all around was dry; and we believe the Lord has said to us, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." We think we have had the Lord's commission, "Go in this thy strength." We do not expect all of you to go with us, for the people are too many. We expect that there are many of the trembling and faint-hearted who will step back from the battle; men who are look ill for their families, mind must provide for them; men who are saving up money, and grudge their sovereigns, and so on—these of course will stand back, and let them; such men encumber our march. We fear that you are not all men who lap; but we have a few who care ery little for the ease and repose of life, but who snatch a hasty draught as they run, and with heat, and zeal, and passionate earnestness run to meet the adversary. Now, these we expect to go with us to the fray. In the name of the Lord, I proclaim a new crusade against the sin and vice of this huge city. What are we to do? The hosts of Midian are to be counted by millions. Here in this great city we have three millions of people, and what if I were to say, two-and-half millions of them do not know their right hand from their left in matters of religion, I believe I should speak too charitably; for if I could believe there were half a million of true believers in London, I should have vastly greater hopes of it than I have now. But, alas! that is not the case. Millions, millions are gathered in he valley of indecision who are not upon the Lord's side. What can you and I do? We can do nothing of ourselves, but we can do everything by he help of our God. Where Christ is there is might and where God is there is strength; let us therefore in God's name determine to plant new Churches wherever openings occur. Like Gideon's men let us rally under our Church-officers, and follow where a warm heart leads the way. Gideon took his men, and bade them do two things; covering up a torch in an earthen pitcher, he bade them, at an appointed signal, break tine pitcher and let the light shine, and then sound with their trumpets, crying, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! the sword of he Lord and of Gideon!" This is just what all Christians must do. First, *you must shine*; break the pitcher which conceals you; throw aside the bushel which has been hiding your candle, and shine. Let your light shine before men; let your good works be such, that when they look upon you, they shall know that you have been with Jesus. There is much good done by the shining. Then *there must be the sound*, the blowing of the trumpet. O dear friends, the great mass of London will never hear r the gospel, unless you go and blow the trumpet in their ears. Many who are members of this Church never heard a gospel sermon, until they heard some of you preaching in the street. "Why," said one "I never went to a place of worship; but I went down a street, and there stood a young man at the corner; I listened to him, and God was pleased to send tine arrow to my conscience, and I came into the house of God afterwards." Take the gospel to them; carry it to their door; put it in their way; do not suffer them to escape it; blow the trumpet right against their ears. In the name of God, I pray you do this. Remember that the true war cry of the Church is Gideon's war-cry, "*The sword of the Lord!*" God must do it, it is God's work. But we are not to be idle; instrumentality is to be used—"The sword of the Lord *and of Gideon!*" Mark you, if we only cry, "The sword of the Lord!" we shall be guilty of an idle presumption, and shall be tempting God to depart from his fixed rule of procedure. This is the cry of every, lazy lie-n-bed. What good ever comes of saying, "The Lord will do his own work, let us sit still?" Nor must it be "The sword of Gideon" alone, for that were idolatrous reliance on an arm of flesh; we can do nothing of ourselves. Not "The sword of the Lord" only, that were idleness; but the two together, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." O my brethren, God help you to learn this lesson well, and then you will go forth shining and sounding, living and teaching, testifying and living out the truth? Ye shall most assuredly make the kingdom of Christ to come, and his name shall be honored if you will do this. It seems to me that now is a

glorious opportunity. There is a spirit of hearing upon the people. Almost anyone may get a hearing who is willing to preach Christ. Now or never! Sons of Jacob! Ye are to be like a lion among the flock of sheep, and will ye lie down and slumber? Up and every man to the prey! Sons of Jacob! ye are to be as dew upon the grass, and will ye tarry for men and wait for the sons of men? No. In God's name, go forward, and let something be done for God, and for his Christ, for a perishing age, for a dark world, for heaven's glory, and for hell's defeat. Up! ye who know the Lord; ye swordsmen of our Israel, up and at them, and God give you a great victory and deliverance!

I want you to make some practical point of these things to-day. God has been pleased to put a sword into my hand, and to give me my lamp and my pitcher; my College of young men is now become in the Lord's hands a marvellous power for good. A blessing greater than I could have expected rests on this work. We are continually sending them out, and God owns them in the conversion of souls. I have never seen any agency more blessed to the conversion of souls, than the agency of our College. Without saying anything to depreciate other efforts, I do believe God has conferred on our Institution a crowning and special blessing, and will continue to do so yet more and more. I want you all, both hearers and readers of my sermons, to feel that this is your work, and to help me in it while I continue to cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! God works, and therefore we work; God is with us, and therefore we are with God, and stand on his side. Inasmuch as many of these men raise Churches, we want you to help to build the places where the new congregations can be accommodated afterwards; and to that end we have striven to raise a fund of five thousand pounds, to be lent out to these new Churches on loan to be repaid by installments without interest. It is but a small sum, but it is as much as I think we can do, and frugal care will turn it to good account. Some three thousand pounds have been promised by our seven shepherds and principal men; but there are many who have not promised anything yet, and we shall be glad if they will come forward, for otherwise this useful fund cannot be raised. When this is done with, once for all, we will go on and do something else for Jesus. Do break this pitcher; get this done, and let the light of this thing shine. We must be doing something for God. I speak to you now upon the practical point, and come to it at once. If *you* are content to live without serving God, *I* am not; and if you are willing to let these hours roll by without doing something to extend the kingdom of Jesus, let me be gone from you; let me be gone from you to those of warmer spirits and of holier aspirations, for I must fight for God! there must be victories won for him! We must extend the range of the gospel; we must find places where souls can be brought to hear the Word. Hell shall not for ever laugh at our inactivity, and heaven shall not eternally weep at our sloth! Let us be up and doing, and let this thing be done by the mainly, the few have already done their parts. Promises reaching over five years are asked of you, you can all do something. And then, every one of you, when you have done your share in this, go out personally and serve with your flaming torch of holy example, and with your trumpet tones of earnest declaration and testimony serve your Lord, and God shall be with you, and Midian shall be put to confusion, and the Lord of hosts shall reign for ever and ever. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Hear ye that note, O dead souls, and live.

Expiation

A Sermon

(No. 561)

By the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.”—Isaiah 53:10.

BOTH Jews and Gentiles knew pretty well what an offering for sin meant. The Gentiles had been in the habit of offering sacrifices. The Jews, however, had by far the clearer idea of it. And what was meant by a sin-offering? Undoubtedly, it was taken for granted by the offerer, that without shedding blood there was no remission of sin. Conscious of guilt, and anxious for pardon, therefore he brought a sacrifice, the blood of which should be poured out at the foot of the altar—feeling persuaded that without sacrifice there was no satisfaction, and without satisfaction there was no pardon. Then the victim to be offered was, on all occasions, a spotless one. The most scrupulous care was taken that it should be altogether without blemish; for this idea was always connected with a sin-offering, that it must be sinless in itself; and being without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, it was held to be a competent victim to take the offender's place. That done, the victim being selected, the offerer put his hand upon the sin-offering—and this indeed was the essence of the whole transaction—putting his hand on the victim, he confessed his sin, and a transference took place, in type at least, from the offender to the victim. He did, as it were, put the sin from off his own shoulders on to those of the lamb, or the bullock, or the he-goat which was now about to be slaughtered. And, to complete the sin-offering, the priest draws his knife and kills the victim which must be utterly consumed with fire. I say this was always the idea of a sin-offering,—that of a perfect victim; without offense on its own account, taking the place of the offender; the transference of the offender's sin to that victim, and that expiation in the person of the victim for the sin done by another.

Now, Jesus Christ has been made by God an offering for sin; and oh that to-night we may be able to do in reality what the Jew did in metaphor! May we put our hand upon the head of Christ Jesus; as we see him offered up upon the cross for guilty men, may we know that our sins are transferred to him, and may we be able to cry, in the ecstasy of faith, “Great God, I am clean; through Jesus' blood I am clean.”

I. In trying now to expound the doctrine of Christ's being an offering for sin, we will begin by laying down one great axiom; which is, that **SIN DESERVES AND DEMANDS PUNISHMENT.**

Certain divines have demurred to this. You are aware, I suppose, that there have been many theories of atonement; and every new or different theory of atonement involves a new or different theory of sin. There are some who say that there is no reason in sin itself why it should be punished, but that God punishes offenses for the sake of society at large. This is what is called the governmental theory,—that it is necessary for the maintenance of good order that an offender should be punished, but that there is nothing in sin itself which absolutely requires a penalty. Now, we begin by opposing all this, and asserting, and we believe we have God's warrant of it, that sin intrinsically and in itself demands and deserves the just anger of God, and that that anger should be displayed in the form

of a punishment. To establish this, let me appeal to the conscience—I will not say to the conscience of a man who has, by years of sin, dwindled it down to the very lowest degree, but let me appeal to the conscience of an awakened sinner,—a sinner under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And are we ever in our right senses, brethren, till the Holy Spirit really brings us into them? May it not be said of each of us as it was of the prodigal, “He came to himself?” Are we not beside ourselves till the Holy Spirit begins to enlighten us? Well, ask this man, who is now really in the possession of his true senses, whether he believes that sin deserves punishment; and his answer will be quick, sharp, and decisive. “Deserve it,” saith he, “ay, indeed; and the wonder is that I have not suffered it. Why, sir, it seems a marvel to me that I am out of hell, and Wesley’s hymn is often on my lips,—

’Tell it unto sinners, tell,

I am, I am out of hell.’”

“Yes, sir,” says such a sinner, “I feel that if God should smite me now, without hope or offer of mercy, to the lowest hell, I should only have what I justly deserve; and I feel that if I be not punished for my sins, or if there be not some plan found by which my sin can be punished in another, I cannot understand how God can be just at all: how shall he be Judge of all the earth, if he suffer offenses to go unpunished?” There has been a dispute whether men have any innate ideas, but surely this idea is in us as early as anything, that virtue deserves reward, and sin deserves punishment. I think I might venture to assert that if you go to the most degraded race of men, you would still find, at least, some traces of this—shall I call it tradition? or is it not a part of the natural light which never was altogether eclipsed in man? Man may put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; darkness for light, and light for darkness; but this follows him as a dog at the heels of its master,—a sense that virtue should be rewarded, and that sin must be punished. You may stifle this voice, if you will, but sometimes you will hear it; and terribly and decisively will it speak in your ears to say to you, “Yes, man, God must punish you; the Judge of all the earth cannot suffer you to go scot free.” Add to this another matter; namely, that God has absolutely declared his displeasure against sin itself. There is a passage in Jeremiah, the forty-fourth chapter and the fourth verse, where he calls it “That abominable thing which I hate.” And then, in Deuteronomy, the twenty-fifth chapter, at the sixteenth verse, he speaks of it as the thing which is an abomination to him. It must be the character of God, that he has a desire to do towards his creatures that which is equitable. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” If there is anything in them which deserves reward, rest assured he will not rob them of it; and, on the other hand, he will do the right thing with those who have offended, and if they deserve punishment, it is according to the nature and character of a just and holy God that punishment should be inflicted. And we think there is nothing more clear in Scripture than the truth that sin is in itself so detestable to God that he must and will put forth all the vigor of his tremendous strength to crush it, and to make the offender feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to offend against the Most High. Beware, ye who forget God in this matter, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. Sin must be punished.

The other idea, that sin is only to be punished for the sake of the community, involves injustice. If I am to be damned for the sake of other people, I demur to it. No, sir: if I am to be punished, Justice says; at any rate, that it shall be for my own sins, but if I am to be eternally a castaway from God’s presence merely as a sort of trick of government to maintain the dignity of his law, I cannot understand the justice of this. If I am to be cast into hell merely that I am to teach to others the tremendousness of the divine holiness, I shall say there is no justice in this; but if my sin intrinsically and of itself deserves the wrath of God, and I am sent to perdition as the result of this fact, I close

my lips, and have nothing to say. I am speechless; conscience binds my tongue. But if I am told that I am only sent there as a part of a scheme of moral government, and that I am sent into torment to impress others with a sense of right, I ask that some one else should have the place of preacher to the people, and that I may be one of those whose felicity it shall be to be preached to; for I see no reason in justice why I should be selected as the victim. Really, when men run away from the simplicities of the gospel in order to make Jehovah more kind, it is strange how unjust and unkind they make him. Sinner, God will never destroy you merely to maintain his government, or for the good of others. If you be destroyed, it shall be because you would not come to him that you might have life; because you would rebel against him; because sin from stern necessity did, as it were, compel the attribute of divine justice to kindle into vengeance, and to drive you from his presence for ever. Sin must be punished.

The reverse of this doctrine, that sin demands punishment, may be used to prove it; for it is highly immoral, dangerous, and opens the floodgates of licentiousness to teach that sin can go unpunished. O sirs, it is contrary to fact. Look ye! Oh! if your eyes could see to-night the terrible justice of God which a being executed now,—if these ears could but hear it,—if ye could be appalled for a moment with

“ The sullen groans and hollow moans
And shrieks of tortured ghosts,”

you would soon perceive that God is punishing sin! And if sin deserve not to be punished, what is Tophet but injustice on a monstrous scale? What is it but an infinite outrage against everything which is honest and right, if these creatures are punished for anything short of their own deserts. Go and preach this in hell, and you will have quenched the fire which is forever to burn, and the worm of conscience will die. Tell them in hell that they are not punished for sin, and you have taken away the very sting of their punishment. And then come to earth, and go, like Jonah went, though with another message than Jonah carried, through the highways and the broadways, the streets and thoroughfares of the exceeding great city, and proclaim that sin is not to be punished for its own intrinsic desert and baseness. But if you expect your prophecy to be believed, enlarge the number of your jails, and seek for fresh fields for transportation in the interests of society; for if any doctrine can breed villains, this will. Say that sin is not to be punished, and you have unhinged government; you have plucked up the very gate of our commonweal; you have been another Samson to another Gaza; and we shall soon have to rue the day. But, sirs, I need not stop to prove it; it is written clearly upon the consciousness of each man, and upon the conscience of every one of us, that sin must be punished. Here are you and I to-night brought into this dilemma. We have sinned; we all like sheep have gone astray; and we must be punished for it. It is impossible, absolutely, that sin can be forgiven without a sacrifice. God must be just, if heaven falls. If earth should pass away and every creature should be lost, the justice of God must stand, it cannot by any possibility be suffered to be impugned. Let this, then, be fully established in our minds.

You need not to be told, as for the first time, that God in his infinite mercy has devised a way by which justice can be satisfied, and yet mercy can be triumphant. Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, took upon himself the form of man, and offered unto Divine Justice that which was accepted as an equivalent for the punishment due to all his people.

II. Now, the second matter that I wish to bring under your notice is this,—**THAT THE PROVISION AND ACCEPTANCE OF A SUBSTITUTE FOR SINNERS IS AN ACT OF GRACE.**

It is no act of grace for a person to accept a pecuniary debt on my behalf of another person. If I owe a man twenty pounds, it is no matter to him whatever who shall pay the twenty pounds so long as it is duly paid. You know that you could legally and at once demand a receipt and an acquittance from any one who is your creditor, so long as his debt is discharged, though it is discharged by another, and not by you. It is so in pecuniary matters, but it is not so in penal matters. If a man be condemned to be imprisoned, there is no law, there is no justice which can compel the lawgiver to accept a substitute for him. If the sovereign should permit another to suffer in his stead, it must be the sovereign's own act and deed. He must use his own discretion as to whether he will accept the substitute or not; and if he do so, it is an act of grace. In Gods case, if he had said in the infinite sovereignty of his absolute will, "I will have no substitute, but each man shall suffer for himself, he who sinneth shall die," none could have murmured. It was grace, and only grace which led the divine mind to say, "I will accept of a substitute. There shall be a vicarious suffering; and my vengeance shall be content, and my mercy shall be gratified."

Now, dear friends, this grace of God is yet further magnified not only in the allowance of the principle of substitution, but in the providing of such a substitute as Christ—on Christ's part that he should give up himself, the Prince of Life to die; the King of glory to be despised and rejected of men; the Lord of angels to be a servant of servants; and the Ancient of days to become an infant of a span long. Think of the distance

"From the highest throne in glory
To the cross of deepest woe,"

and consider the unexampled love which shines in Christ's gift of himself. But the Father gives the Son. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To give your wealth is something, if you make yourself poor; but to give your child is something more. When the patriot mother tears her son from her bosom, and cries, "Go, my first-born, to your country's wars; there, go and fight until your country's flag is safe, and the hearths and homes of your native land are secure," there is something in it; for she can look forward to the bloody spectacle of her son's mangled body, and yet love her country more than her own child. Here is heroism indeed; but God spared not his own Son, his only-begotten Son, but freely delivered him up for us all. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I do implore you, do not look upon the sacrifice of Christ as an act of mere vengeance on the Father's part. Never imagine, oh! never indulge the idea, that Jesus died to make the Father complacent towards us. Oh, no, dear friends: Jesus' death is the effect of overwhelming and infinite love on the Father's part; and every blow which wounds, every infliction which occasions sorrow, and every pang which rends his heart, speaks of the Father's love as much as the joy, the everlasting triumph, which now surrounds his head.

Let us add, however, to this, that, although Jesus Christ's dying as a substitute does give to him lawful right to all promised privileges, and does make him, as the covenant head of his people a claimant of the divine mercy, yet it does not render any of the gifts which we receive from God the less gifts from God. Christ has died; but still everything that we receive comes to us entirely as a gratuitous outflow of God's great heart of love. Never think you have any claim to anything because Christ purchased it. If you use the word *claim* at all, let it always be in so humble and modified a sense that you understand that you are still receiving, not of debt, but of grace. Look upon the whole transaction of a substitute, and of Christ becoming the second Adam, as being a matter of pure,

rich, free, sovereign grace, and never indulge the atrocious thought, I pray you, that there was justice, and justice only here; but do magnify the love and pity of God in that he did devise and accomplish the great plan of salvation by an atoning sacrifice.

III. But now to go a step further, and with as much brevity as possible. The Lord having established the principle of substitution, having provided a substitute, and having through him bestowed upon us gratuitously innumerable mercies, let us observe **THAT JESUS IS THE MOST FITTING PERSON TO BE A SUBSTITUTE, AND THAT HIS WORK IS THE MOST FITTING WORK TO BE A SATISFACTION.**

Let every sinner here who desires something stable to fix his faith upon, listen to these simple truths, which I am trying to put as plainly as possible. You do understand me, I trust, that God must punish sin; that he must punish you for sin unless some one else will suffer in your stead; that Jesus Christ is the person who did suffer in the room and place of all those who ever have believed on him who do believe in him, or ever shall believe in him, —making for those who believe on him a complete atonement by his substitution in their place. Now we say that Christ was the best person to be a substitute; for just consider what sort of a mediator was needed. Most absolutely he must be one who had no debt of his own. If Christ had been at all under the law naturally, if it had been his duty to do what it is our duty to do, it is plain he could only have lived for himself; and if he had any sin of his own, he could only have died for himself, seeing his obligations to do and to suffer would have been his just due to the righteousness and the vengeance of God. But on Christ's part there was no natural necessity for obedience, much less for obedience unto death. Who shall venture to say that the Divine Lord, amidst the glories of heaven, owed to his father anything? "Who shall say it was due to the Divine Father that Christ should be nailed to the accursed tree, to suffer, bleed, and die, and then be cast into the grave? None can dare to say such a thing. He is himself perfectly free, and therefore can he undertake for others. One man who is drawn for the militia cannot be a substitute for another person so drawn, because he owes for himself his own personal service. I must, if I would escape, and would procure a substitute, find a man who is not drawn, and who is therefore exempt. Such is Jesus Christ. He is perfectly exempt from service, and therefore can volunteer to undertake it for our sake. He is the right person.

There was needed, also, one of the same nature with us. Such is Jesus Christ. For this purpose he became man, of the substance of his mother, very man, such a man as any of us. Handle him, and see if he be not flesh and bones. Look at him, and mark if he be not man in soul as well as in body. He hungers; he thirsts, he fears, he weeps, he rejoices, he loves, he dies. Made in all points and like unto us, being a man, and standing exactly in a man's place, becoming a real Adam,—as true an Adam as was the first Adam, standing quite in the first Adam's place,—he is a fit person to become a substitute for us.

But please to observe (see if you cannot throw your grappling-hooks upon this), the dignity of his sacred person made him the most proper person for a substitute. A mere man could at most only substitute for one other man. Crush him as you will, and make him feel in his life every pang which flesh is heir to, but he can only suffer what one man would have suffered. He could not, I will venture to say, even then have suffered an equivalent for that eternal misery which the ungodly deserve; and if he were a mere man, he must suffer precisely the same. A difference may be made in the penalty, when there is a difference in the person; but if the person be the same, the penalty must be precisely and exactly the same in degree and in quality. But the dignity of the Son of God, the dignity of his nature, changes the whole matter. A God bowing his head, and suffering and

dying, in the person of manhood, puts such a singular efficacy into every groan and every pang that it needs not that his pangs should be eternal, or that he should die a second death. Remember that in pecuniary matters you must give a *quid pro quo*, but that in matters of penal justice no such thing is demanded. The dignity of the person adds a special force to the substitution; and thus one bleeding Saviour can make atonement for millions of sinful men, and the Captain of our salvation can bring multitudes unto glory.

It needs one other condition to be fulfilled. The person so free from personal service, and so truly in our nature, and yet so exalted in person, *should also be accepted and ordained of God*. Our text gives this a full solution, in that it says, "*He shall make his soul an offering for sin.*" Christ did not make himself a sin-offering without a warrant from the Most High: God made him so. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It was the sovereign decree of heaven which constituted Christ the great substitute for his people. No man taketh this office upon himself. Even the Son of God stoopeth not to this burden uncalled. He was chosen as the covenant-head in election; he was ordained in the divine decree to stand for his people. God the Father cannot refuse the sacrifice which he has himself appointed. "My son," said good old Abraham, "God shall provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." He has done so in the Saviour; and what God provides, God must and will accept.

I wish to-night that I had power to deal with this doctrine as I would. Poor trembling sinner, look up a moment. Dost thou see him there—him whom God hath set forth? Dost thou see him in proper flesh and blood fastened to that tree? See how the cruel iron drags through his tender hands! Mark how the rough nails are making the blood flow profusely from his feet! See how fever parches his tongue, and dries his whole body like a potsherd! Hearest thou the cry of his spirit, which is suffering more than his body suffers—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is none other than God's only-begotten Son; this is he who made the worlds; this is the express image of his Father's person, the brightness of Jehovah's glory! What thinkest thou, man? Is there not enough there to satisfy God? Truly it has satisfied God: is there not enough there to satisfy thee? Cannot thy conscience rest on that? If God's appointed Christ could suffer in thy stead, is it not enough? What can Justice ask more? Wilt thou now trust Christ with thy soul? Come, now, sir, wilt thou now fall flat at the foot of the cross, and rest thy soul's eternal destiny in the pierced hands of Jesus of Nazareth? If thou wilt, then God has made him to be a sin-offering for thee; but if thou wilt not, beware, lest he whom thou wouldst not have to be thy Saviour should become thy Judge, and say, "Depart, thou cursed one, into everlasting fire in hell!"

IV. We come now to our fourth remark,—**THAT CHRIST'S WORK, AND THE EFFECTS OF THAT WORK, ARE NOW COMPLETE.**

Christ becomes a substitute for us. We have seen how fit and proper a person he was to be such. We hinted that from the dignity of his person the pains he suffered were a good and sufficient equivalent for our own suffering on account of sin. But now the joyous truths come up that Christ's work is finished. Christ has made an atonement so complete that he never need suffer again. No more drops of blood; no more pangs of heart; no more bitterness and darkness, with exceeding heaviness, even unto death, are needed.

"'Tis done—the great transaction's done."

The death-knell of the penalty rings in the dying words of the Saviour,—"*It is finished.*" Do you ask for a proof of this? Remember that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. If he had not completed his work of penalty-suffering, he would have been left in the tomb till now; our preaching

would have been in vain, and your faith would have been in vain; ye would have been yet in your sins. But Jesus rose. God's sheriff's officer let him out of "durance vile" because the account had been discharged, and God's great Court of King's Bench sent down the *mittimus* to let the captive go free. More than that: Christ has ascended upon high. Think you he would have returned thither with unexpiated sin red upon his garments? Do you suppose he would have ascended to the rest and to the reward of an accomplished work? What! sit at his Father's right hand to be crowned for doing nothing, and rest until his adversaries are made his footstool, when he has not performed his Father's will! Absurd! Impossible! His ascension in stately pomp, amidst the acclamations of angels, to the enjoyment of his Father's continued smile, is the sure proof that the work is complete.

Complete it is, dear brethren, not only in itself, but, as I said, in its effects; that is to say, that there is now complete pardon for every soul which believeth in Christ. You need not do anything to make the atonement of Christ sufficient to pardon you. It wants no eking out. It is not as if Christ had put so much into the scale and it was quivering in the balance; but your sins, for all their gravity, utterly ceased their pressure through the tremendous weight of his atonement. He has outweighed the penalty, and given double for all your sins. Pardon, full and free, is now presented in the name of Jesus, proclaimed to every creature under heaven, for sins past, for sins present, and for sins to come; for blasphemies and murders; for drunkenness and whoredom; for all manner of sin under heaven. Jesus Christ hath ascended up on high, and exalted he is that he may give repentance and remission of sin. Ye have no need of shillings to pay the priests; nor is baptismal water wanted to erect the pardon: there is no willing, doing, being, or suffering of yours required to complete the task. The blood has filled the fountain full: thou hast but to wash and be clean, and thy sins shall be gone forever.

Justification, too, is finished. You know the difference. Pardon takes away our filth, but then it leaves us naked; justification puts a royal robe upon us. How no rags of yours are wanted; not a stitch of yours is needed to perfect what Christ has done. He whom God the Father hath accepted as a sin offering hath perfected forever thou who are set apart. Ye are complete in Christ. No tears of yours, no penance, no personal mortifications, nay, no good works of yours, are wanted to make yourself complete and perfect. Take it as it is. O sirs! may you have grace to take it as it is freely presented to you in the gospel. "He that believeth on him is not condemned;" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Trust Christ—implicitly trust Christ; and all that he did shall cover you, while all that he suffered shall cleanse you.

Remember, too, that acceptance is finished. There are the Father's arms, and here are you, a black sinner to-night. I do not know you, but it may be you have trodden the pavements, or you have gone further than that, and added drunkenness to shame; you have gone to the lowest vice, perhaps to robbery,—who knoweth what manner of person may step into this place?—but the great arms of the Eternal Father are ready to save you as you are, because the great work of Christ has effected all that is wanted before God for the acceptance of the vilest sinner. How is it that the Father can embrace the prodigal? Why! he is fresh from the swine-trough! Look at him: look at his rags; how foul they are! We would not touch them with a pair of tongs! Take him to the fire and burn the filth! Take him to the bath and wash him! That lip is not fit to kiss; those filthy lips cannot be permitted to touch that holy cheek of the glorious Father! Ah! but it is not so. While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him,—rags and poverty and sin and filth and all,—and he did not wait till he was clean, but ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him, just as he was. How could he do that? Why, the parable does not tell us; for it did not run on with the subject to introduce the

atonement. But this explains it,—when God accepts a sinner, he is, in fact, only accepting Christ. He looks into the sinner's eyes, and he sees his own dear Son's image there, and he takes him in. As we have heard of a good woman, who, whenever a poor sailor came to her door, whoever he might be, would always make him welcome, because, she said, "I think I see my own dear son who has been these many years away, and I have never heard of him; but whenever I see a sailor, I think of him, and treat the stranger kindly for my son's sake." So my God, when he sees a sinner long for pardon and desirous of being accepted, thinks he sees his Son in him, and accepts him for his Son's sake. Do not imagine that we preach a gospel in this place for respectable, godly people. No: we preach a gospel here for sinners. I heard, the other day, from one who told me that he believed we were saved by being perfect, that when we committed sin we at once fell out of God's mercy. Well now, supposing that were true, it would not be worth making a large splutter about. It would not be worth angels singing "Glory to God in the highest" about it, I should think. Any fool might know that God would accept a perfect man. But this is the thing of marvel, for which heaven and earth shall ring with the praises of the Mediator, that Jesus Christ died for the ungodly,—that Jesus Christ gave himself for their sin; not for their righteousness, not for their good deeds. If he had looked to all eternity, he could not have seen anything in us worthy of so great a suffering as that which he endured; but he did it for charity's sake,—for love's sake.

And now, in his name,—oh that I could do it with his voice and with his love and with his fervor!—I do beseech you to lay hold upon him. No matter who you may be, I will not exclude you from the invitation. Hast thou piled thy sins together till they seem to provoke heaven? Do thy sins touch the clouds? Yet come, and welcome; for God has provided a sin-offering. Has man cast thee out? Say, poor woman, does the dreary river seem to invite thee to the fatal plunge? God has not cast thee out. O thou who feelest in thine own body the effect of thy sin, till thou art loathing thyself, and wishing thou hadst never been born—perhaps thou sayest, like John Bunyan, "Oh that I had been a frog, or a toad, or a snake, sooner than have been a man, to have fallen into such sin, and to have become so foul!" Have courage, sinner; have courage. "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." Do not doubt this message: God has sent it to you. Do not reject it: you will reject your own life if you do. Turn you at his rebuke! It is a loving voice which speaks to you, and that would speak, perhaps, better and more forcibly if it were not choked with love. I do implore thee, sinner, come to Jesus! If thou art damned it is not for want of invitation. If thou wilt perish, it is not for want of earnest pleading with thee. I tell thee, man, there is nothing of thine own wanted. All this is found in the sin-offering; for thou needest not find it. There is no merit of thine needed; there is merit enough in Christ. Is it not the old proverb that you are not to take coals to Newcastle? Do not take anything to Christ. Come as you are—just as you are. Nay, tarry not till you go out of this house. The Lord enable you to believe in Jesus now, to take him now as a complete and finished salvation for you, though you may be the most sunken and abandoned and hopeless of all characters. Why did God provide a sin-offering but for sinners? He could not have wanted to provide it if there was no necessity. You have a great necessity. You have, shall I say? compelled him to it. Your sins have nailed Christ's hands to the cross,—your sins have pierced his heart; and his heart is not pierced in vain, nor are those hands nailed there for naught. Christ will have you, sinner, Christ will have you. There are some of God's elect here, and he will have you. You shall not stand out against him. Almighty love will have you. He has determined that you shall not do what you have vowed. Your league with hell is broken to-night,

and your covenant with death is disannulled. The prey shall not be taken from the mighty; the lawful captive shall be delivered. The Lord will yet fetch you up from the depths of the sea. Oh! what a debtor to grace you will be! Be a debtor to that grace to-night. Over head and ears in debt, plunge yourself by a simple act of trusting in Jesus, and you are saved.

Pray, ye who know how to pray, that this message may be made effective in the hand of God. And you who have never prayed before, God help you to pray now. May he now be found of them who sought not for him, and he shall have the glory, world without end. Amen.

“Alas For Us, If Thou Wert All, and Nought Beyond, O Earth”

A Sermon

(No. 562)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 27th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”—1 Corinthians 15:19.

YOU WILL UNDERSTAND that the apostle is arguing with professedly Christian people, who were dubious about the resurrection of the dead. He is not saying that all men are now miserable if there be no hope of the world to come, for such an assertion would be untrue. There are very many who never think of another life, who are quite happy in their way, enjoy themselves, and are very comfortable after a fashion. But he speaks of Christian people—“If *we*, who have hope in Christ, are led to doubt the doctrine of a future state and of a resurrection, then we are of all men most miserable.” The argument has nothing to do with some of you who are not Christians; it has nothing to do with you who have never been brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace; it only respects those who are real, living followers of the Savior, and who are known by this, that they have *hope in Christ*—hope in his blood for pardon, in his righteousness for justification, in his power for support, in his resurrection for eternal glory. “If we who have hope in Christ, have that hope for this life only, then we are of all men most miserable.” You understand the argument; he is appealing to their consciousness; they, as Christians, had real enjoyments, “but,” says he, “you could not have these enjoyments if it were not for the hope of another life; for once take that away, if you could still remain Christians and have the same feelings which you now have, and act as you now do, you would become of all men most miserable,” therefore to justify your own happiness and make it all reasonable, you must admit a resurrection; there is no other method of accounting for the joyous peace which the Christian possesses. Our riches are beyond the sea; our city with firm foundations lies on the other side the river: gleams of glory from the spirit-world cheer our hearts, and urge us onward; but if it were not for these, our present joys would pine and die.

We will try and handle our text this morning in this way. First, *we are not of all men most miserable*; but secondly, *without the hope of another life we should be*—that we are prepared to confess—because thirdly, *our chief joy lies in the hope of a life to come*; and thus, fourthly, *the future influences the present*; and so, in the last place, *we may to-day judge what our future is to be*.

I. First then, WE ARE NOT OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE. Who ventures to say we are? He who will have the hardihood to say so knoweth nothing of us. He who shall affirm that Christianity makes men miserable, is himself an utter stranger to it, and has never partaken of its joyful influences. It were a very strange thing indeed, if it did make us wretched, for see *to what a position it exalts us!* It makes us sons of God. Suppose you that God will give all the happiness to his enemies, and reserve all the mourning for his sons? Shall his foes have mirth and joy, and shall his own home-born children inherit sorrow and wretchedness? Are the kisses for the wicked and

the frowns for us? Are we condemned to hang our harps upon the willows, and sing nothing but doleful dirges, while the children of Satan are to laugh for joy of heart? We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. Shall the sinner, who has no part nor lot in Christ, call himself happy, and shall we go mourning as if we were penniless beggars? No, we will rejoice in the Lord always, and glory in our inheritance, for we “have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The rod of chastisement must rest upon us in our measure, but it worketh for us the comfortable fruits of righteousness; and therefore by the aid of the divine Comforter, we will rejoice in the Lord at all times. We are, my brethren, married unto Christ; and shall our great Bridegroom permit his spouse to linger in constant grief? Our hearts are knit unto him: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and though for awhile we may suffer as our Head once suffered, yet we are even now blessed with heavenly blessings in him. Shall our Head reign in heaven, and shall we have a hell upon earth? God forbid: the joyful triumph of our exalted Head is in a measure shared by us, even in this vale of tears. We have the earnest of our inheritance in the comforts of the Spirit, which are neither few nor small. Think of a Christian! He is a king, and shall the king be the most melancholy of men? He is a priest unto God, and shall he offer no sweet incense of hallowed joy and grateful thanksgiving? We are fit companions for angels: he hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and shall we have no days of heaven upon earth? Is Canaan ours from Dan to Beersheba, and shall we eat no fruit from Eshcol’s vine on this side of Jordan? Shall we have no taste of the figs, and of the pomegranates, and of the flowing milk and honey? Is there no manna in the wilderness? Are there no streams in the desert? Are there no streaks of light to herald our eternal sunrising? Heritors of joy for ever, have we no foretastes of our portion? I say again, it were the oddest thing in the world if Christians were more miserable than other men, or not more happy. Think again of *what God has done for them!* The Christian knows that his sins are forgiven; there is not against the believer a single sin recorded in God’s book. “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.” More than that, the believer is accounted by God as if he had perfectly kept the law, for the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he stands clothed in that fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints, And shall the man whom God accepts be wretched? Shall the pardoned offender be less happy than the man upon whom the wrath of God abideth? Can you conceive such a thing? Moreover, my brethren, we are made temples of the Holy Ghost, and is the Holy Ghost’s temple to be a dark, dolorous place, a place of shrieks, and moans, and cries, like the Druidic groves of old? Such is not like our God. Our God is a God of love, and it is his very nature to make his creatures happy; and we, who are his twice-made creatures, who are the partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, is it to be supposed that we are bound by a stern decree to go mourning all our days? Oh! if ye knew the Christian’s privilege, if ye understood that the secret of the Lord is laid open to him, that the wounds of Christ are his shelter, that the flesh and blood of Christ are his food, that Christ himself is his sweet companion and his abiding friend, oh! if ye knew this, ye would never again foolishly dream that Christians are an unhappy race. “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” Who can be compared with the man who is “satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord.” Well might the evil prophet of Bethor exclaim, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

We will go a step farther. We will not only say that from the nature of his position and privileges, a Christian should be happy, but we declare that he is so, and that among all men there are none who enjoy such a *constant peace* of mind as believers in Christ. Our joy may not be like that of the sinner, noisy and boisterous. You know what Solomon says—"The laughter of fools is as the crackling of thorns under a pot"—a great deal of blaze and much noise, and then a handful of ashes, and it is all over. "Who hath woe, who hath redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine—men of strength to mingle strong drink." The Christian, in truth, does not know much of the excitement of the bowl, the viol and the dance, nor does he desire to know; he is content that he possesses a calm deep-seated repose of soul. "He is not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." He is not disturbed with any sudden fear: he knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." He is in the habit in whatever society he may be, of still lifting up his heart to God; and therefore he can say with the Psalmist, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

"He waits in secret on his God;
 His God in secret sees;
 Let earth be all in arms abroad,
 He dwells in heavenly peace.
 His pleasures rise from things unseen,
 Beyond this world and time,
 Where neither eyes nor ears have been,
 Nor thoughts of sinners climb.
 He wants no pomp nor royal throne
 To raise his figure here:
 Content and pleased to live unknown,
 Till Christ his life appear.

"There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God." Believers drink of that river and thirst not for carnal delights. They are made "to lie down in green pastures," and are led "beside the still waters." Now this solid, lasting joy and peace of mind sets the Christian so on high above all others, that I boldly testify that there are no people in the world to compare with him for happiness. But do not suppose that our joy never rises above this settled calm; for let me tell you, and I speak experimentally, we have our seasons of *rapturous delight* and overflowing bliss. There are times with us when no music could equal the melody of our heart's sweet hymn of joy. It would empty earth's coffers of every farthing of her joy to buy a single ounce of our delight. Do not fancy Paul was the only man who could say, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth," for these ecstasies are usual with believers; and on their sunshiny days when their unbelief is shaken off and their faith is strong, they have all but walked the golden streets; and they can say, "If we have not entered within the pearly gate, we have been only just this side of it; and it we have not yet come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, if we have not joined the great congregation of the perfect in actual body, yet still—

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
 With those that went before,
 And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
 On the eternal shore."

I would not change one five minutes of the excessive joy my soul has sometimes felt for a thousand years of the best mirth that the children of this world could give me. O friends, there is a happiness which can make the eye sparkle and the heart beat high, and the whole man as full of bounding speed of life as the chariots of Amminadib. There are raptures and high ecstasies, which on festival days such as the Lord alloteth to his people, the saints are permitted to enjoy. I must not fail to remind you that the Christian is the happiest of men for this reason, that *his joy does not depend upon circumstances*. We have seen the happiest men in the most sorrowful conditions. Mr. Renwick, who was the last of the Scotch martyrs, said a little before his death, "Enemies think themselves satisfied that we are put to wander in mosses and upon mountains, but even amidst the storm of these last two nights I cannot express what sweet times I have had when I have had no coverings but the dark curtains of night: yea, in the silent watch my mind was led out to admire the deep and inexpressible ocean of joy wherein the whole family of heaven do swim. Each star led me to wonder what He must be who is the star of Jacob, and from whom all stars borrow their shining." Here is a martyr of God driven from house and home and from all comforts, and yet having such sweet seasons beneath the curtains of the black night as kings do not often know beneath their curtains of silk. A minister of Christ going to visit a very, very poor man, gives this description. He says, "I found him alone, his wife having gone out to ask help of some neighbor. I was startled by the sight of the pale emaciated man, the living image of death, fastened upright in his chair by a rude mechanism of cords and belts hanging from the ceiling, totally unable to move hand or foot, having been for more than four years entirely deprived of the use of his limbs, and suffering extreme pain from swellings in all his joints. I approached him full of pity, and I said, "Are you left alone, my friend, in this deplorable situation?" He answered with a gentle voice—his lips were the only parts of his body which he appeared to have power to move—"No, sir, I am not alone, because the Father is with me." I began to talk with him, and I soon observed what was the source of his consolation, for just in front of him lay the Bible upon a pillow, his wife having left it open at some choice Psalm of David so that he might read while she was gone, as he had no power to turn over the leaves. I asked him what he had to live upon, and found that it was a miserable pittance, scarcely enough to keep body and soul together, "But," said he, "I never want anything, for the Lord has said, 'Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure,' and I trust in him, and I shall never want while God is faithful to his promise." "I asked him," says this minister "whether he did not often repine on account of suffering so acutely for so many years. "Sir," said he, "I did repine at first, but not for the last three years, blessed be God for it, for I know whom I have believed, and though I feel my own weakness and unworthiness more and more, yet I am persuaded that he will never leave me nor forsake me; and so graciously does he comfort me that when my lips are closed with lock-jaw and I cannot speak a word for hours together, he enables me to sing his praises most sweetly in my heart." Now here was a man to whom the sun of all earthly comfort was set, and yet the sun of heaven shone full in his face, and he was more peaceful and happy in deep poverty and racking pain than all you or I have been in the health and strength of youth. John Howard spent his time in visiting the gaols and going from one haunt of fever to another, he was asked how he could find any ground of happiness when he was living in miserable Russian villages, or dwelling in discomfort in an hospital or a gaol. Mr. Howard's answer was very beautiful. "I hope," said he, "I have sources of enjoyment which depend not upon the particular spot I inhabit. A rightly cultivated mind, under the power of divine grace and the exercise of a benevolent disposition affords a ground of satisfaction that is not to be affected by heres and theres."

Every Christian will bear you his witness that he has found his sad times to be his glad times, his losses to be his gains, his sicknesses means to promote his soul's health. Our summer does not depend upon the sun, nor our flood-tide upon the moon. We can rejoice even in death. We look forward to that happy hour when we shall close our eyes in the peaceful slumbers of death, believing that our last day will be our best day. Even the crossing of the river Jordan is but an easy task, for we shall hear him say, "Fear not; I am with thee: be not dismayed, I am thy God; when thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee." We dare to say it, then, very boldly, we are *not* of all men most miserable: we would not change with unconverted men for all their riches, and their pomp, and their honor thrown into the scale.

"Go you that boast in all your stores,
 And tell how bright they shine,
 Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
 And my Redeemer's mine.

II. This brings us to the second point—WITHOUT THE HOPE OF ANOTHER LIFE, WE WILL ADMIT, THAT WE SHOULD BE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE.

Especially was this true of the apostles. They were rejected by their countrymen; they lost all the comforts of home; their lives were spent in toil, and were daily exposed to violent death. They all of them suffered the martyr's doom, except John, who seems to have been preserved not from martyrdom, but in it. They were certainly the twelve most miserable of men apart from that hope of the world to come, which made them of all men the most happy. But this is true, dear friends, not merely of persecuted, and despised, and poverty-stricken Christians, but of all believers. We are prepared to grant it, that take away from us the hope of the world to come we should be more miserable than men without religion. The reason is very clear, if you think that the Christian has *renounced those common and ordinary sources of joy from which other men drink*. We must have some pleasure: it is impossible for men to live in this world without it, and I can say most truthfully I never urge any of you to do that which would make you unhappy. We must have some pleasure. Well then, there is a vessel filled with muddy filthy water which the camels' feet have stirred: shall I drink it? I see yonder a rippling stream of clear flowing water, pure as crystal and cooling as the snow of Lebanon, and I say, "No, I will not drink this foul, muddy stuff; leave that for beasts; I will drink of you clear stream." But if I be mistaken, if there be no stream yonder, if it be but the deceitful mirage, if I have been deluded, then I am worse off than those who were content with the muddy water, for they have at least some cooling draughts; but I have none at all. This is precisely the Christian's case. He passes by the pleasures of sin, and the amusements of carnal men, because he says, "I do not care for them, I find no pleasure in them: my happiness flows from the river which springs from the throne of God and flows to me through Jesus Christ—I will drink of that," but if there were no hereafter, if that were proved to be a deception, then were we more wretched than the profligate and licentious.

Again, the Christian man has *learned the vanity of all earthly joys*. We know when we look upon pomp that it is an empty thing. We walk through the world, not with the scorn of Diogenes, the cynical philosopher, but with something of his wisdom, and we look upon the common things in which men rejoice, and say with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And why do we say this? Why, because we have chosen eternal things in which there is no vanity, and which are satisfying to the soul. But, my brethren, it is the most unhappy piece of knowledge which a man can acquire, to know that this world is vain, if there be not another world abundantly to compensate

for all our ills. There is a poor lunatic in Bedlam, plaiting straw into a crown which he puts upon his head, and calls himself a king, and mounts his mimic throne and thinks that he is monarch over all nations, and is perfectly happy in his dream. Do you think that I would undeceive him? Nay, verily, if I could, I would not. If the delusion makes the man happy, by all means let him indulge in it; but, dear friends, you and I *have been* undeceived; our dream of perfect bliss beneath the skies is gone for ever; what then if there be no world to come? Why then it is a most sorrowful thing for us that we have been awakened out of our sleep unless this better thing which we have chosen, this good part which shall not be taken from us, should prove to be real and true, as we do believe it is.

Moreover, the Christian man is a man who has had *high, noble, and great expectations*, and this is a very sad thing for us if our expectations be not fulfilled, for it makes us of all men most miserable. I have known poor men waiting and expecting a legacy. They had a right to expect it, and they have waited, and waited, and borne with poverty, and the relative has died and left them nothing; their poverty has ever afterwards seemed to be a heavier drag than before. It is an unhappy thing for a man to have large ideas and large desires, if he cannot gratify them. I believe that poverty is infinitely better endured by persons who were always poor, than by those who have been rich and have had to come down to penury, for they miss what the others never had, and what the originally poor would look upon as luxuries they consider to be necessary to their existence. The Christian has learned to think of eternity, of God, of Christ, of communion with Jesus, and if indeed it be all false, he certainly has dreamed the most magnificent of all mortal visions. Truly, if any man could prove it to be a vision, the best thing he could do would be to sit down and weep for ever to think it was not true, for the dream is so splendid, the picture of the world to come so gorgeous, that I can only say, if it be not true, it ought to be—if it be not true, then there is nothing here worth living for, my brethren, and we are disappointed wretches indeed—of all men most miserable.

The Christian, too, *has learned to look upon everything here on earth as fleeting*. I must confess every day this feeling grows with me. I scarce look upon my friends as living. I walk as in a land of shadows, and find nothing enduring around me. The broad arrow of the great skeleton king is, to my eye, visibly stamped everywhere. I go so often to the grave, and with those I least expected to take there, that it seems to be rather a world of dying than of living men. Well, this is a very unhappy thing—a very wretched state of mind for a man to be in, if there be no world to come. If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is the Christian indeed committed to a state of mind the most deplorable and pitiable. But, O my brethren, if there be a world to come, as faith assures us there is, how joyous it is to be weaned from the world, and to be ready to depart from it! To be with Christ is far better than to tarry in this vale of tears.

“The cords that bound my heart to earth
 Are broken by his hand;
 Before his cross I find myself,
 A stranger in the land.
 My heart is with him on his throne,
 And ill can brook delay;
 Each moment listening for the voice,
 ‘Make haste, and come away.’”

May I not pant to be in my own sweet country with my own fair Lord, to see him face to face? Yet, if it be not so and there be no resurrection of the dead, “we are of all men most miserable.”

III. OUR CHIEF JOY IN THE HOPE OF THE WORLD TO COME. Think of the world to come, my brethren, and let your joys begin to kindle into flames of delight, for heaven offers you all that you can desire. You are, many of you, weary of toil; so weary, perhaps, that you can scarcely enjoy the morning service because of the late hours at which you have had to work at night. Ah! there is a land of *rest*—of perfect rest, where the sweat of labor no more bedews the worker's brow, and fatigue is for ever banished. To those who are weary and spent, the word "rest" is full of heaven. Oh! happy truth, there remaineth a rest for the people of God. "They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Others of you are always in the field of battle; you are so tempted within, and so molested by foes without, that you have little or no peace. I know where your hope lies. It lies in the *victory*, when the banner shall be waved aloft, and the sword shall be sheathed, and you shall hear your Captain say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast fought a good fight; thou hast finished thy course: henceforth wear thou the crown of life which fadeth not away." Some of you are tossed about with many troubles; you go from care to care, from loss to loss: it seems to you as if all God's waves and billows had gone over you; but you shall soon arrive at the land of *happiness*, where you shall bathe your weary soul in seas of heavenly rest, You shall have no poverty soon; no mud-hovel, no rags, nor hunger. "In my Father's house are many mansions," and there shall you dwell, satisfied with favor, and full of every blessing. You have had bereavement after bereavement; the wife has been carried to the tomb, the children have followed, father and mother are gone, and you have few left to love you here; but you are going to the land where graves are unknown things, where they never see a shroud, and the sound of the mattock and the spade are never heard; you are going to your Father's house in the land of the *immortal*, in the country of the hereafter, in the home of the blessed, in the habitation of God Most High, in the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all. Is not this your best joy, that you are not to be here for ever, that you are not to dwell eternally in this wilderness, but shall soon inherit Canaan? With all God's people their worst grief is sin. I would not care for any sorrow, if I could live without sinning. Oh! if I were rid of the appetites of the flesh and the lusts thereof, and the desires which continually go astray, I would be satisfied to lie in a dungeon and rot there, so as to be delivered from the corruption of sin. Well but, brethren, we shall soon attain unto *perfection*. The body of this death will die with this body. There is no temptation in heaven, for the dog of hell can never cross the stream of death; there are no corruptions there, for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; there shall by no means enter into that kingdom anything which defileth. Methinks as I hear the joyous song of the glorified this morning, as I catch floating down from heaven the sound of that music which is like many waters and like the great thunder, and as I hear the harmony of those notes which are sweet as harpers harping with their harps, my soul desireth to stretch her wings, and fly straight to yonder worlds of joy. I know it is so with you, my brethren in the tribulation of Christ—as you wipe the sweat your brow, is not this the comfort: there is rest for the people of God? As you stand out against temptation and suffer for Christ's sake, is not this your comfort: "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." When you are slandered and despised by men, is not this your hope: "He will remember me when he cometh into his kingdom. I shall sit upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and sitteth down upon his Father's throne?" Oh! yes, this is the music to which Christians dance; this is the wine which maketh glad their hearts; this is the banquet at which they feast. There is another and a better land, and we, though we sleep with the clods of the valley, shall in our flesh see God, when our Redeemer shall stand in the latter days upon the

earth. I think you catch my drift—we are *not* of all men most miserable; apart from the future hope we should be, for our hope in Christ for the future is the mainstay of our joy.

IV. Now, dear friends, this brings me to a practical observation in the fourth place, which is, that **THUS THE FUTURE OPERATES UPON THE PRESENT.**

I had some time ago a conversation with a very eminent man whose fame is familiar to you all, but whose name I do not feel justified in mentioning, who was once a professed believer but is now full of scepticism. He said to me in the course of our argument, “Why, how foolish you are, and all the company of preachers. You tell people to think about the next world, when the best thing they could do would be to behave themselves as well as they can in this!” I granted the truth of the observation; it would be very unwise to make people neglect the present, for it is of exceeding great importance, but I went on to show him that the very best method to make people attend to the present was by impressing them with high and noble motives with regard to the future. The potent force of the world to come supplies us through the Holy Spirit with force for the proper accomplishment of the duties of this life. Here is a man who has a machine for the manufacture of hardware. He wants steam power to work this machine. An engineer puts up a steam engine in a shed at some considerable distance. “Well,” saith the other, “I asked you to bring steam power here, to operate upon my machine.” “That is precisely,” says he, “what I have done. I put the steam engine there, you have but to connect it by a band and your machine works as fast as you like; it is not necessary that I should put the boiler, and the fire, and the engine close to the work, just under your nose: only connect the two, and the one will operate upon the other.” So God has been pleased to make our hopes of the future a great engine wherewith the Christian man may work the ordinary machine of every-day life, for the band of faith connects the two, and makes all the wheels of ordinary life revolve with rapidity and regularity. To speak against preaching the future as though it would make people neglect the present is absurd. It is as though somebody should say, “There, take away the moon, and blot out the sun. What is the use of them—they are not in this world?” Precisely so, but take away the moon and you have removed the tides, and the sea becomes a stagnant, putrid pool. Then take away the sun—it is not in the world—take it away, and light, and heat, and life; everything is gone. What the sun and moon are to this natural world, the hope of the future is to the Christian in this world. It is his light—he looks upon all things in that light, and sees them truly. It is his heat; it gives him zeal and energy. It is his very life: his Christianity, his virtue would expire if it were not for the hope of the world to come. Do you believe, my brethren, that apostles and martyrs would ever have sacrificed their lives for truth’s sake if they had not looked for a hereafter? In the heat of excitement, the soldier may die for honor, but to die in tortures and mockeries in cold blood needs a hope beyond the grave. Would you poor man go toiling on year after year, refusing to sacrifice his conscience for gain; would you poor needle-girl refuse to become the slave of lust if she did not see something brighter than earth can picture to her as the reward of sin? O my brethren, the most practical thing in all the world is the hope of the world to come; and you see the text teaches this, for it is just this which keeps us from being miserable; and to keep a man from being miserable, let me say, is to do a great thing for him, for a miserable Christian—what is the use of him? Keep him in a cupboard, where nobody can see him; nurse him in the hospital, for he is of no use in the field of labor. Build a monastery, and put all miserable Christians in it, and there let them meditate on mercy till they learn to smile; for really there is no other use for them in the world, But the man who has a hope of the next world goes about his work strong, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. He goes against, temptation mighty, for the hope of

the next world repels the fiery darts of the adversary. He can labor without present reward, for he looks for a reward in the world to come. He can suffer rebuke, and can afford to die a slandered man, because he knows that God will avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him. Through the Spirit of God the hope of another world is the most potent force for the product of virtue; it is a fountain of joy; it is the very channel of usefulness. It is to the Christian what food is to the vital force in the animal frame. Let it be said of any of us, that we are dreaming about the future and forgetting the present, but let the future sanctify the present to highest uses. I fear our prophetic brethren err here. They are reading continually about the last vials, the seventy weeks of Daniel, and a number of other mysteries; I wish they would set to work instead of speculating so much, or speculate even more if they will, but turn their prophecies to present practical account. Prophetic speculations too often lead men away from present urgent duty, and especially from contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; but a hope of the world to come is, I think, the best practical power which a Christian can have.

V. And now, to conclude, this will let us see very clearly WHAT OUR FUTURE IS TO BE.

There are some persons here to whom my text has nothing whatever to say. Suppose there were no hereafter, would they be more miserable? Why, no; they would be more happy. If anybody could prove to them that death is an eternal sleep, it would be the greatest consolation that they could possibly receive. If it could be shown, to a demonstration, that as soon as people die they rot in the grave and there is an end of them—why some of you could go to bed at night comfortable, your conscience would never disturb you, you would be molested by none of those terrible fears which now haunt you. Do you see, then, this proves that you are not a Christian; this proves as plainly as twice two make four, that you are no believer in Christ; for if you were, the taking away of a hereafter would make you miserable. Since it would not tend to make you happy to believe in a future state, this proves that you are no believer in Christ. Well, then, what have I to say to you? Why just this—that in the world to come, *you will be of all men most miserable*. “What will become of you?” said an infidel once to a Christian man, “supposing there should be no heaven?” “Well,” said he, “I like to have two strings to my bow. If there be no hereafter I am as well off as you are; if there be I am infinitely better off. But where are you? Where are you?” Why then we must read this text in the future—“If in this life there be indeed a hope of a life to come, then you shall be in the next life of all men most miserable.” Do you see where you will be? Your soul goes before the great Judge, and receives its condemnation and begins its hell. The trumpet rings; heaven and earth are astonished; the grave heaves; yonder slab of marble is lifted up, and up you rise in that very flesh and blood in which you sinned, and there you stand in the midst of a terrified multitude, all gathered to their doom. The Judge has come. The great assize has commenced. There on the great white throne sits the Savior who once said, “Come unto me, ye weary, and I will give you rest;” but now he sits there as a Judge and opens with stern hand the terrible volume. Page after page he reads, and as he reads he gives the signal, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,” and the angels bind up the fates in bundles to burn them. There stand you, and you know your doom; you already begin to feel it. You cry to the lofty Alps to fall upon you and conceal you. “O ye mountains, can ye not find in your rocky bowels some friendly cavern where I may be hidden from the face of him who sits upon the throne?” In terrible silence the mountains refuse your petition and the rocks reject your cry. You would plunge into the sea, but it is licked up with tongues of fire; you would fain make your bed even in hell if you could escape from those dreadful eyes, but you cannot; for now your turn is come, that page is turned over which records your history; the Savior reads with a voice

of thunder and with eyes of lightning. He reads, and as he waves his hand you are cast away from hope. You shall then know what it is to be *of all men most miserable*. Ye had your pleasure; ye had your giddy hour; ye had your mirthful moments; you despised Christ, and you would not turn at his rebuke; you would not have him to reign over you; you lived his adversary; you died unreconciled, and now where are you? Now, what will ye do, ye who forget God, in that day when he shall tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver you? In the name of my Lord and Master I do conjure you, fly away to Christ for refuge. "He that believeth in him shall be saved." To believe is to trust; and whosoever this morning is enabled by faith to cast himself upon Christ, need not fear to live, nor fear to die, You shall not be miserable here; you shall be thrice blessed hereafter if you trust my Lord.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
To Christ, and heal your wounds;
This is the welcome gospel-day
Wherein free grace abounds."

O that ye would be wise and consider your latter end! O that ye would reflect that this life is but a span, and the life to come lasts on for ever! Do not, I pray you, fling away eternity; play not the fool with such solemn things as these, but in serious earnestness lay hold upon eternal life. Look to the bleeding Savior; see there his five wounds, and his face bedewed with bloody sweat! Trust him, trust him, and you are saved. The moment that you trust him your sins are gone. His righteousness is yours; you are saved on the spot, and you shall be saved when he cometh in his kingdom to raise the dead from their graves. O that the Lord might lead us all thus to rest on Jesus, now and ever. Amen.

The Barley Field on Fire

A Sermon

(No. 563)

Delivered on Sunday Morning,, April 3rd, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him; and when he sent again, the second time, he would not come. Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab’s field is near mine, and he hath barley there: Go and set it on fire. And Absalom’s servants set the field on fire. Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?”—2 Samuel 14:29-31.

YOU REMEMBER the historical narrative. Absalom had fled from Jerusalem under fear of David’s anger. He was after a time permitted to return; but he was not admitted into the presence of the king. Earnestly desiring to be restored to his former posts of honor and favor, he besought Joab to come to him, intending to request him to act as mediator. Joab, having lost much of his liking for the young prince, refused to come; and, though he was sent for repeatedly, he declined to attend at his desire. Absalom therefore thought of a most wicked, but most effective plan of bringing Joab into his company. He bade his servants set Joab’s field of barley on fire. This brought Joab down in high wrath to ask the question, “Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?” This was all that Absalom wanted; he wished an interview, and he was not scrupulous as to the method by which he obtained it. The burning of the barley-field brought Joab into his presence, and Absalom’s ends were accomplished.

Omitting the sin of the deed, we have here a picture of what is often done by our gracious God, with the wisest and best design. Often he sendeth for us, not for his profit, but for ours. He would have us come near to him and receive a blessing at his hands; but we are foolish and cold-hearted and wicked, and we will not come. He, knowing that we will not come by any other means, sendeth a serious trial: he sets our barley-field on fire; which he has a right to do, seeing our barley-fields are far more his than they are ours. In Absalom’s case it was wrong; in God’s case he has a right to do as he wills with his own. He takes away from us our most choice delight, upon which we have set our heart, and then we inquire at his hands, “Wherefore contendest thou with me? Why am I thus smitten with thy rod? What have I done to provoke thee to anger?” And thus we are brought into the presence of God, and we receive blessings of infinitely more value than those temporary mercies which the Lord had taken from us. You will see, then, how I intend to use my text this morning. As the pastor of so large a church as this, I am constantly brought into contact with all sorts of human sorrow. Frequently it is poverty,—poverty too which is not brought on by idleness or vice, but real poverty and most distressing and afflicting poverty too, because it visits those who have fought well the battle of life, and have struggled hard for years, and yet in their old age scarce know where bread shall come from, except that they rest upon the promise—“Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.” Messengers come to me sometimes as fast as they came to Job, bearing sad tidings concerning one and another of you. There comes one—“I entreat your prayers for me, sir: God has been pleased to take away my wife with a stroke; she now lies

in the cold grave." Another cries, "O sir, my wife is sore sick, and the physician saith that there is but little hope: pray for her, that she may be strengthened in the hour of her departure; and for me, that I may be enabled to kiss the Master's rod." Then comes another—"My son is afflicted; he is to undergo a painful operation: pray that the surgeon's knife may not be his death, but that he may be enabled to bear up under it." And when I have sympathized with a company of sad complaints like these, another set of messengers will be waiting at the door. How few families are long without severe trials! hardly a person escapes for any long season without tribulation. With impartial hand sorrow knocks at the door of the palace and the cottage. Why all this? The Lord, we know, "Doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" for naught; why can it be that he employs so many frowning servants, and sendeth out so often his usher of the black rod? Wherefore can it be? Perhaps I may be able to give the fitting answer to this very proper inquiry, and it may be that I may be as serviceable to the afflicted as the jailer was to Paul and Silas when he washed their stripes.

I shall use my text, first of all, *in reference to believers*; and then, *with regard to the unconverted*. Oh for help from above!

I. First of all, brethren, let us use the text WITH REFERENCE TO BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.

My beloved brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ, *we* cannot expect to avoid tribulation. If other men's barley-fields are not burned, ours will be. If the Father uses the rod nowhere else, he will surely make his true children smart. As Paul saith, and as our hymnster hath rhymed it—

"Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight,
But the true-born child of God,
Must not—would not if he might."

Your Saviour hath left you a double legacy, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace." You enjoy peace; you must not expect that you shall escape without the privilege of the tribulation. All wheat must be threshed: and God's threshing-floor witnesses to the weight of the flail as much as any other. Gold must be tried in the fire; and truly the Lord hath a fire in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

But you, beloved, have four very special comforts in all your trouble. You have, first, this sweet reflection, that *there is no curse in your cross*. Christ was made a curse for us, and we call his cross the accursed tree; but, truly, since Jesus hung upon it, it is most blessed; and I may now say concerning the cross of affliction, "Blessed is every man who hangeth on this tree." The cross may be very heavy, especially while it is green, and our shoulders unused to carrying it; but remember, though there may be a ton-weight of sorrow in it, there is not a single ounce of the curse in it. God doth never punish his children in the sense of avenging justice: he chastens as a father does his child, but he doth never punish his redeemed as a judge doth a criminal. It were unjust to exact punishment in their place and stead. How shall the Lord punish twice for one offence? If Christ took my sins and stood as my substitute, then there is no wrath of God for me; and though my cup may be bitter, yet there cannot be a single drop of the wormwood of Almighty wrath in it. I may have to smart, but it will never be beneath the lictor's rods of justice, but under the Parent's rod of wisdom. O Christian! how sweet this ought to be to you! There was a time when you were under conviction of sin,—when you thought you would rot in a dungeon or burn at the stake most cheerfully, if you could but get rid of the sense of God's wrath; and will you now become impatient? The wrath of God is the thunderbolt which scathes the soul; and now that you are delivered from

that tremendous peril, you must not be overwhelmed with the few showers and gales which Providence sends you. A God of love inflicts our sorrows: he is as good when he chastens as when he caresses: there is no more wrath in his afflicting providences than in his deeds of bounty. God may seem unkind to unbelief, but faith can always see love in his heart. Oh! what a mercy that Sinai has ceased to thunder! Lord, let Jesus say what he will, so long as Moses is quieted forever. Strike, Lord, if thou wilt, now that thou hast heard the Saviour's plea and justified our souls.

You have, secondly, another ground of comfort; namely, *that your troubles are all apportioned to you by divine wisdom and love*. As for their number, if He appoint them ten, they never can be eleven. As for their weight, He who weigheth the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, takes care to measure your troubles, and you shall not have a grain more than his infinite wisdom sees fit. The devil may seem to be turned loose upon you, but remember he is always a chained enemy. There is a tether to every trouble, and beyond that tether it can never stray. Nebuchadnezzar may heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual, but God's thermometer measures the exact degree of heat; and beyond it the flame cannot rage, even though a thousand Nebuchadnezzars should swear themselves out of breath in their fury. Consider everything that you have to suffer as the appointment of wisdom, ruled by love, and you will rejoice in all your tribulation, knowing that it shall reveal to you the loving-kindness and wisdom of your God.

You have a third consolation; namely, that under your cross *you have many special comforts*. There are cordials which God giveth to sick saints which he never putteth to the lips of those who are in health. Dark caverns keep not back the miners, if they know that diamonds are to be found there: you need not fear suffering, when you remember what riches it yields to your soul. There is no hearing the nightingale without night, and there are some promises which only sing to us in trouble. It is in the cellar of affliction that the good old wine of the kingdom is stored. You shall never see Christ's face so well as when all others turn their backs upon you. When you have come into such confusion that human wisdom is at a nonplus, then shall you see God's wisdom manifest and clear. Oh the love-visits which Christ payeth to his people when they are in the prison of their trouble! Then he layeth bare his very heart to them, and comforts them as a mother doth her child. They sleep daintily who have Jesus to make their beds. Suffering saints are generally the most flourishing saints; and well they may be, for they are Jesus' special care. If you would find a man whose lips drop with pearls, look for one who has been in the deep waters. We seldom learn much except as it is beaten into us by the rod in Christ's schoolhouse, under Madam Trouble. God's vines owe more to the pruning-knife than to any other tool in the garden; superfluous shoots are sad spoilers of the vines. But even while we carry it, the cross brings present comfort: it is a dear, dear cross, all hung with roses, and dripping with sweet-smelling myrrh. Rutherford seemed at times in doubt which he loved best, Christ or his cross; but then, good man, he only loved the cross for his Lord's sake. Humble souls count it a high honor to be thought worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. If ever heaven be opened at all to the gaze of mortals, the vision is granted to those who dwell in the Patmos of want and trouble. Furnace-joys glow quite as warmly as furnace-flames. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and sweet are its accompaniments when the Lord is with his people.

“Mid the gloom the vivid lightnings
 With increasing brightness play;
 'Mid the thorn-brake beauteous flowrets
 Look more beautiful and gay.
 So, in darkest dispensations

Doth my faithful Lord appear,
 With his richest consolations,
 To reanimate and cheer.”

But then,—and this is the point to which my text brings me, and all I have already said is going astray from it,—you have this comfort, that *your trials work your lasting good* by bringing you nearer and nearer to God. This point we will illustrate by the narrative before us. My dear friends in Christ Jesus, *our heavenly Father often sends for us and we will not come*. He sends for us *to exercise a more simple faith in him*. We have believed, and by faith we have passed from death unto life, but our faith sometimes staggers. We have not yet reached to Abraham’s confidence in God; we do not leave our worldly cares with him, but, like Martha, we cumber ourselves with much serving. We have faith to lay hold upon little promises; but we are oftentimes afraid to open our mouths wide though God has promised to fill them. He therefore sendeth to us. “Come, my child,” saith he; “come and trust me. The veil is rent: enter into my presence, and approach boldly to the throne of my grace. I am worthy of thy fullest confidence: cast thy cares on me. Come thou into the sunlight, and read thy title clear. Shake thyself from the dust of thy cares, and put on thy beautiful garment of faith. ” But, alas! though called with tones of love to the blessed exercise of this comforting grace, we will not come. At another time he calls us *to closer communion with himself*. We have been sitting on the doorstep of God’s house, and he bids us advance into the banqueting-hall and sup with him; but we decline the honor. He has admitted us into the inner chambers, but there are secret rooms not yet opened to us; he invites us to enter them, but we hold back. Jesus longs to have near communion with his people. This is that which gives him “to see of the travail of his soul, and to be satisfied.” It must be a joy to a Christian to be with Christ; but it is also a joy to Jesus to be with his people, for it is written, “His delights were with the sons of men.” Now, one would think that if Christ did but beckon with his finger and say to us, “Draw nigh, and commune with me,” we should fly as though we had wings to our feet; but, instead thereof, we are cleaving to the dust: we have too much business; we have too many carking cares; and we forget to come, though it is our Beloved’s voice which calls us to himself. Frequently the call is *to more fervent prayer*. Do you not feel in yourself, at certain seasons, an earnest longing for private prayer? You have felt as if you could not be at ease until you could draw near unto God and tell him your wants; and yet, may be, you have quenched the Spirit in that respect, and still have continued without nearness of access to God. Every day the Lord bids his people come to him and ask what they will, and it shall be done. He is a bounteous God, who sits upon the mercy-seat, and he delights to give to his people the largest desires of their hearts; and yet, shame upon us, we live without exercising this power of prayer, and we miss the plentitude of blessing which would come out of that cornucopia of grace,—prevailing prayer with God. Ah, brethren, we are verily guilty here, the most of us. The Master sendeth to us to pray, and we will not come. Often, too, he calls us *to a higher state of piety*. From this pulpit I have labored to stir you up to nobler attainments; I have besought you to rest no longer satisfied with your dwarfish attainments, but to press forward to things more sublime and heavenly. Have I not cried unto you, beloved, and bid you

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

I am persuaded there are Christians as much in grace beyond ordinary Christians as ordinary Christians are beyond the profane. There are heights which common eyes have never seen, much less scaled. Oh! there are nests among the stars where God’s own saints dwell, and yet how many

of us are content to go creeping along like worms in the dust! Would that we had grace to cleave the clouds and mount into the pure blue sky of fellowship with Christ! We do not serve God as we should. We are cold as ice, when we should be like molten metal, burning our way through all opposition. We are like the barren Sahara, when we should be blooming like the garden of the Lord. We give to God pence, when he deserveth pounds; nay, deserveth our heart's blood to be coined in the service of his church and of his truth. Oh! we are but poor lovers of our sweet Lord Jesus; not fit to be his servants, much less to be his brides. If he had put us in the kitchen to be scullions, I fear we are scarce fit for the service; and yet he hath exalted us to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, married to him by a glorious marriage covenant. O brethren! God often calleth us to higher degrees of piety, and yet we will not come.

Now, why is it that we permit the Lord to send for us so often, without going to him? Let your own heart give the reason, in a humble confession of your offenses. O my brethren, we never thought we should have been so bad as we are. If an angel had told us that we should be so indifferent towards Christ, we should have said, as Hazael did to Elisha, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" If any of us could have seen our own history written out by a prophet's pen, we should have said, "No; it cannot be. If Christ forgives me, I must love him; if he be pleased to make me his own brother, I must serve him; if I am the recipient of such splendid mercies, I must do something commensurate with his bounty." And yet, hitherto, here we have been ungrateful, unbelieving, and even refusing to listen to his call, or come at his bidding. He has said, "Seek ye my face;" and our heart did not say, "Lord, thy face will I seek." Because of all this, because we will not listen to the gentle call of God, there cometh trouble, just as there came the burning of the barley-field of Joab because he would not visit the young prince. Trouble comes in all sorts of shapes. Little doth it matter what form it cometh in, if it doth answer the purpose of making us obey the divine calling.

Some Christians have their trial in the shape of *sickness*: they drag about with them a diseased body all their lives; or they are suddenly cast upon a bed of sickness, and they toss to and fro, by night and by day, in pain and weariness. This is God's medicine; and when God's children have it, let them not think it is sent to kill them, but to heal them. Much medicine which the physician gives makes the man ill for a time: he is worse with it than he would have been without it; but if he be a clever physician, he knows that this is the consequence of the medicine; and thus he is not at all alarmed by the pain of his patient, but he expects that all this will work for good, and hunt out, as it were, the original disease. When the Lord sends us sore sickness, it for a time perhaps makes our former spiritual infirmities grow worse; for sickness often provoketh impatience and murmurings against God, but in due time our proud spirits will be broken, and we shall cry for mercy. As a file takes off rust, so does sickness frequently remove our deadness of heart. The diamond hath much cutting, but its value is increased thereby; and so with the believer under the visitations of God. I have heard say of many ministers that they preach best after sickness, till their people have scarce regretted all the pains they have felt when they have found how savory and full of marrow have been their words. My brother, if you will not come to God without it, he will send you a sick-bed that you may be carried on it to him. If you will not come running, he will make you come limping. If you will not come while your eyes are bright and while your countenance is full of health, he will make you come when your eyes are dull and heavy, and your complexion is sallow and sad. But come you must; and if by no other means, sickness shall be the black chariot in which you shall ride.

Losses, too, are frequently the means God uses to fetch home his wandering sheep: like fierce dogs, they worry the wanderers back to the shepherd. There is no making lions tame if they are too well fed; they must be brought down from their great strength, and their stomachs must be lowered a bit, and then they will submit to the tamer's hand: and often have we seen the Christian rendered obedient to his Lord's will by straitness of bread and hard labor. When rich and increased in goods, many professors carry their heads much too loftily and speak much too boastfully. Like David, they boast, "My mountain standeth fast; it shall never be moved." When the Christian groweth wealthy, is in good repute, hath good health, and a happy family, he too often admits Mr. Carnal Security to feast at his table. If he be a true child of God, there is a rod preparing for him. Wait awhile, and it may be you will see his substance melt away as a dream. There goes a portion of his estate—how soon the acres change hands! There goes a part of his business—no profits will ever come to him again in that direction. That debt yonder, a dishonored bill over there—how fast his losses come! where will they end? Now, as these embarrassments come in one after another, he begins to be distressed about them, and betakes himself to his God. O blessed waves, that wash the man on the rock of salvation! O blessed cords, though they may cut the flesh, if they draw us to Jesus! Losses in business are often sanctified to our soul's enriching. If you will not come to the Lord full-handed, you shall come empty. If God in his grace findeth no other means of making you to honor him among men—if you cannot honor him on the pinnacle of riches—he will bring you down to the valley of poverty.

Bereavements, too,—ah! what sharp cuts of the rod we get with these, my brethren! We know how the Lord sanctifies these to the bringing of his people near to himself. How glad we should be to think that Christ himself once suffered bereavements as we have done. Tacitus tells us that an amber ring was thought to be of no value among the Romans till the emperor took to wearing one, and then straightway an amber ring was held in high esteem. Bereavements might be looked upon as very sad things; but when we recollect that Jesus wept over his friend Lazarus, henceforth they are choice jewels, and special favors from God. Christ wore this ring: then I must not blush to wear it. Many a mother has been stirred up to a holier life by the death of her infant,—many a husband has been led to give his heart more to Christ by the death of his wife. Do not departed spirits, like angels, beckon us up to heaven? "Come, come away," they say; "this is not your rest. I once could build upon the same tree, and sing upon the same bough; but now I am taken from you,—now I rest in heaven. Come hither, thou who wast once my fond mate—come hither, for all the trees where thou are building are marked for the axe; therefore come now, and dwell with me!" Yes, we must look upon our new-made graves in this light, and pray the Lord to dig our hearts with the funeral spade, and bury our sins as we bury our departed ones. *Trials in your family*, in your children, are another form of the burning barley-field. I do not know, brethren, but I think a living cross is much heavier to carry than a dead one. I know some among you who have not lost your children: I could have wished you had, for they have lived to be your grief and sorrow. Ah, young man! better that your mother should have seen you perish in the birth than that you should live to disgrace your father's name. Ah, man! it were better for you that the procession had gone winding through the streets, bearing your corpse down to the grave, than that you should live to blaspheme your mother's God, and laugh at the Book which is her treasure. It were better for you that you had never been born, and better for your parents too. Ah! but, dear friends, even these are meant to draw us nearer to Christ. We must not make idols of our children; and we dare not do it, when we see how manifestly God shows us that, like ourselves, they are by nature children of wrath. Sharper than an

adder's tooth is an unthankful child; but the venom is turned to medicine in God's hand. God's birds would often keep down in the grass in their nests; but he fills their nests full of thorns, and then up they fly, and sing as a lark as they mount towards heaven. You must look upon these family trials as invitations from God—sweet compulsion to make you seek his face. Many are afflicted in another way, which is perhaps as bad as anything else,—by *a deep depression of spirit*. They are always melancholy; they know not why. There are no stars in the night for them, and the sun gives no light by day: melancholy has marked them for her own; but even this, I think, is often the means of keeping some of them nearer to God than they would be. You know there are some of our English plants which greatly affect damp, moist places under trees. If the sun were to shine in their faces they would die. Perhaps some minds are of the same order. Too many sweets make children sick, and bitters are a good tonic. A veil is needed for some delicate complexions, lest the sun look too fiercely on them: it may be, these mourners need the veil of sorrow. It is good that they have been afflicted, even with this heavy depression of spirit, because it keeps them near their God. Then there is that other affliction, the *hiding of God's countenance*—how hard to bear, but how beneficial! If we will not keep near to our Lord, he is sure to hide his face. You have seen a mother walking out with her little child, when it has just learned to walk; and as she goes through the street, the little one is for running sometimes to the right, and sometimes to the left, and so the mother hides herself a moment; then the child looketh round for the mother, and begins to cry, and then out comes the mother. What is the effect? Why, it will not run away from the mother any more: it is sure to keep hold of her hand afterwards. So, when we get wandering from God, he hides his face, and then, since we have a love for him, we begin crying after him; and when he shows his face once more, we cling to him the more lovingly ever afterwards. So the Lord is pleased to bless our troubles to us.

Now, Christian, what about all this? Why, just this. Are you under any sharp trouble now? Then I pray you go to God as Joab went to Absalom. "Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?" "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Make this a special season of humbling and heart-searching. Now let every besetting sin be driven out. When God sweeps, do you search. When you are under the rod, it is yours to make a full confession of past offenses, and pray to be delivered from their power in the future. Or, have you no trial to-day, my brother? Then see if there be not something which may provoke God to send one, and begin now to purge yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit by the Holy Ghost. Prevention is better than a cure; and sometimes a timely heart-searching may save us many a heart-smarting. Let us see to that, then. Or have we been afflicted, and is the affliction over now? Then, let us say with David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Let us bless God for all that he has done, saying "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" let us join together in one common hymn of praise for all the loving-kindness which God has been pleased to show us in the sharp cuts of his rod. I have said enough, I think, to the Christian, to work out the little picture before us. God has burned your barley-field, dear friends: now go to him, and the closer you can approach to him, and the more firmly you can cling to him, the better for your soul's health and comfort all your life. At the last, you and I shall sing to the praise of our afflicting God.

All I meet I find assists me
In my path to heavenly joy;

Where, though trials now attend me,
 Trials never more annoy.
 Blest there with a weight of glory,
 Still the path I'll ne'er forget,
 But, exulting, cry, It led me
 To my blessed Saviour's seat.

II. A few words—God make them mighty—TO THE SINNER shall form the second part of our discourse. God also has sent *for you*. O unconverted man! God has often sent for you. Early in your childhood your mother's prayers sought to woo you to a Saviour's love, and your godly father's first instructions were as so many meshes of the net in which it was desired that you should be taken; but you have broken through all these, and lived to sin away early impressions and youthful promises. Since that you have often been called under the ministry. Our sermons have not been all shots wide of the mark, but sometimes a hot shot has burnt its way into your conscience and you have been made to tremble; but, alas! the trembling soon gave way before your old sins. Hitherto you have been called, but you refused. The hands of mercy have been stretched out, and you have not regarded them. You have had calls, too, from your Bible, from religious books, from Christian friends. Holy zeal is not altogether dead, and it shows itself by looking after your welfare. Young man, your shopmate has sometimes spoken to you; young woman, your companion has wept over you. There are some of you now present who have been called by the most loving of voices, in connection with our classes. Both in our Sunday-school and in the catechumenical classes there are men and women with deep love to the souls of those committed to them,—tender hearts, weeping eyes,—and you have been wept over that you might come to Christ; but still all the agency that has been employed has been up to this moment without effect; you are a stranger to the God who made you, and an enemy to Christ the Saviour.

Well, if these gentle means will not do, God will employ other agencies. Perhaps he has tried them already. If not,—if he intendeth in the divine decree your eternal salvation,—he will, as sure as you are a living man, use stronger ways with you; and if a word will not do, he will come with a blow, though he loveth to try the power of the word first. You, too, my hearer unconverted and unsaved, have had your trials. You weep as well as Christians. You may not weep for sin, but sin shall make you weep. You may abhor repentance because of its sorrow, but you shall not escape sorrow, even if you escape repentance. you have had your sickness. Do you remember it, when in the silent night you heard the watch ticking out, as you thought, your last few minutes, and foretelling your doom? Do you remember those weary days, when you tossed from side to side, and did but shift the place and keep the pain? Man, can you recollect your vows, which you have lived to break, and your promises with which you lied unto the eternal God? Then the Sabbath would be your delight, you said, if you were spared, and the house of God and the people of God should be dear to you, and you would seek his face. But you have not done so: you have broken your covenant, and have despised your promise made to God. Or, what is it, have you had losses in business? You began life well and hopefully, but nothing has prospered with you. I am not sorry for it; for I remember it is the wicked who spreadeth himself like a green bay tree, and it is concerning the reprobate that it is written, "There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." I am glad that you are plagued. I would sooner see you whipped to heaven than coached to hell. Doubtless many go, like Agag, delicately to their hewing in pieces, while others go sorrowing to eternal glory. You have had losses:

what are these but God's rough messengers to tell you that there is nothing beneath the sky worth living for, to wean you from the breasts of earth and cause you to look for something more substantial than worldly riches can afford you? And you, too, have lost friends; may I recall those graves, whose turf is yet so newly laid? May I remind you of children fair and beautiful in your eyes, taken away from you despite your tears? Shall I remind you of the parent who sleeps in Jesus? of a sweet sister who withered like a lily by early consumption? Shall I bring these thoughts back to you? I would not wish to make your wounds bleed afresh, but it is for your good that I bid you hearken to their solemn voice; for they say to you, "Come to your God. Be reconciled to him!" I do not think you ever will come to Jesus, unless the Holy Spirit shall employ trials to bring you. I find that the woman never found her piece of money till she swept the house. The prodigal never came back till he was hungry, and fain would have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat. I only hope that these troubles may be blessed to you. Besides this, you have had your depression of spirit. If I mistake not, I address some who are under such depressions now. You do not know how it is, but nothing is pleasant to you. You went to the theater last night. You wished you had not: it gave you no joy; and yet you have been as merry there as any, in former times. You go among your companions, and a day's pleasuring, as they call it, has become to you a very painful waste of time. You have lost the zest of life; and I am not sorry for it, if it should make you look for a better life, and trust in a world to come. My friends, again I say, this is the burning of your barley-fields. God has sent for you, and you would not come; and now he has sent messengers who are not so easily refused. He has sent these with sterner and rougher words, which speak to your flesh, if your spirit will not hear.

Well, now, what then? If God is sending these, *are you listening to them?* My hearer, if God has sent these, have you listened to them? There are some of you of whom I almost despair. God can save you, but I cannot tell you how he will do it. Certainly the Word does not seem likely to be blessed. You have been called and entreated; early and late we have entreated you. Our hearts have yearned with tenderness for you, but hitherto in vain. God knows I have been hammering away at the granite, and it has not yielded yet; I have smitten the flint, and it is not broken. Some of you all but break the plowshare: you are such rocks that it seems in vain to plow upon you. As for trouble, I do not see that that is likely to do you any good; for if you are smitten again, you will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick already, and the whole heart is faint. You have been beaten, till from the crown of the head to the sole of your foot there is nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores. You are poor—perhaps your drunkenness has made you so; you have lost your wife—perhaps your cruelty helped to kill her; you have lost your children, and you are left a penniless, friendless, helpless beggar, and yet you will not turn to God! What now is to be done unto you? O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? Shall I give thee up? How can I give thee up? "How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" The heart of mercy still yearns after thee. Return thou! return thou! God help thee to return, even now.

Others of you have not suffered all this in the past, but are just now enduring a part of it. Let me entreat you, by the mercies of God and by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you despise not him who speaketh unto you. God doth not continue to send his messengers forever. After he hath labored with you for a time, he will leave you to cursing. Long-suffering lasts not forever. Mercy hath its day. Behold, the King runs up the white flag of comfort to-day, and he invites you to come unto him. To-morrow he may run up the red flag of threatening; and if that answereth not, if that red flag will not make you turn, he will run up the black flag of execution, and then there

will be no hope. Beware! The black flag is not run up yet: the red flag is there now in trials and troubles, which are God's threatenings to you, bidding you open wide your heart that grace may enter; but if it cometh to this that the red flag fail, the black flag must come. Perhaps it has come! God help you with broken heart to cry unto him that you may be saved, before the candle is blown out and the sun is set, and the night of the dead is come on without the hope of another sun rising on a blessed resurrection.

What is the drift of all this? My drift is this: If, now, a word of mine could make you come to the King this morning—I know it will not unless God the Holy Spirit compels you to do so by his irresistible power; but if he would bless it, I would rejoice as one who findeth great spoil. Wherefore do you stand out against God? If the Lord intendeth your eternal salvation, your resistance will be in vain; and how will you vex yourself in after years to think that you should have stood out so long! Wherefore dost thou resist? God's battering-ram is too mighty for the walls of your prejudice: he will make them fall yet. Why dost thou stand out against thy God, against him who loveth thee, who hath loved thee with an everlasting love, and redeemed thee by the blood of Christ? Why standest thou out against him who intends to lead thy captivity captive, and to make thee yet his rejoicing child? "Oh!" saith one, "if I thought there were such mercy as that, I would yield." If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, this shall be an evidence that such mercy is ordained for thee. Oh that the Spirit of God would enable thee, sinner, to come just as thou art and put thy trust in Christ! If thou dost so, then it is certain that thy name is written in the Lamb's book of Life, that thou wast chosen of God and art precious to him, and that thy head is one on which the crown of immortality is to glitter forever. Oh that thou wouldst trust Christ! The joy and peace it works in the present is worth worlds; but oh the glory, the overwhelming glory which in worlds to come shall belong to those that trust in Jesus! God give you this morning to cast your souls upon the finished work of Jesus. His blood can cleanse; his righteousness can cover; his beauty can adorn; his prayer can preserve; his advent shall glorify; his heaven shall make you blessed. Trust him! God help you to trust him; and he shall have all the praise, both now and forever. Amen and amen.

Baptismal Regeneration

A Sermon

(No. 573)

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

Rev. 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 supposed 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 long-suffering 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 turving 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 never 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 the 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 Saviour 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 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, 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.]

Children Brought to Christ, and Not to the Font

A Sermon

(No. 581)

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

Rev. 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 sermon upon “Baptismal Regeneration.” 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 carefully 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?" Is it 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 someone 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 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 lisping, 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 instances 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 godmothers 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 gives 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 that 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 no wise cast you out. May the Lord add his blessing on these words for Jesus' sake. Amen.

A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad!

A Sermon

(No. 585)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, August 7th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him”—John 11:14-15.

There lived in the little village of Bethany a very happy family. There was neither father nor mother in it: the household consisted of the unmarried brother Eleazar, or Lazarus, and his sisters, Martha and Mary, who dwelt together in unity so good and pleasant that there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. This affectionate trio were all lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and were frequently favoured with His company. They kept open house whenever the Great Teacher came that way. Both for the Master and for the disciples there was always a table, a bed, and a candlestick in the prophet's chamber, and sometimes sumptuous feasts were prepared for the whole company. They were very happy, and rejoiced much to think that they could be serviceable to the necessities of one so poor, and yet so honoured as the Lord Jesus. But, alas! affliction cometh everywhere; virtue may sentinel the door, but grief is not to be excluded from the homestead. “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward;” if the fuel be a log of sweet-smelling sandal wood, yet the sparks must rise, and even so the best of families must feel affliction. Lazarus sickens. It is a mortal sickness beyond the power of physicians. What is the first thought of the sisters but to send for their friend Jesus? They know that one word from His lips will restore their brother: there is no absolute need that He should even risk His safety by a journey to Bethany; He has but to speak the word and their brother shall be made whole. With glowing hopes and moderated anxieties, they send a tender message to Jesus—“Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.” Jesus hears it, and sends back the answer which had much comfort in it, but could hardly compensate for His own absence: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” There lies poor *Lazarus* after the message is come; he does not recover; he is a little more cheerful, because he hears that his sickness is not unto death, but his pains do not abate; the clammy death-sweat gathers on his brow; his tongue is dry; he is full of pains and racked with anguish, at last he passes through the iron gate of death, and there lies his corpse before the weeping sisters' eyes. Why was not Jesus there? Why did He not come? Tender hearted as He always was, what could have made Him thus unkind? Why tarrieth He so? Why is He so long in coming? How can His words be true? He said, “This sickness is not unto death”; and there lies the good man cold in death, and the mourners are gathering for the funeral. Look at *Martha!* She has been sitting up every night watching her poor brother; no care could have been more constant, no tenderness more excessive. There is no potion in the range of her housewifery which she has not compounded; this herb and the other she has gathered, and she has administered all sorts of medicinal drinks and nourishing foods; and anxiously has she watched until her eyes are red for want of sleep. Jesus might have spared her all this. Why did He not? He had only to will it, and the flush of health would have returned to the cheek of Lazarus, and there would have been no more need of this weary

nursing, and this killing watchfulness. What is Jesus doing? Martha was willing to serve Him, will He not serve her? She has even cumbered herself about much-serving for His sake, giving Him not only necessaries but dainties, and will He not give her what is so desirable to her heart, so essential to her happiness—her brother's life? How is it He can send her a promise which He doth not seem to keep, and tantalize her with hope, and cast down her faith? As for *Mary*, she has been sitting still at her brother's side, listening to his dying words, repeating in his ear the gracious words of Jesus which she had been wont to hear when she sat at His feet, catching the last accents of her expiring brother, thinking less about the medicine and about the diet than Martha did, but thinking more about his spiritual health and about his soul's enjoyment. She has endeavoured to stay the sinking spirits of her beloved brother with words like these, "He will come; He may wait, but I know Him, His heart is very kind, He will come at the last; and even if He let thee sleep in death it will be but for a little; He raised the widow's son at the gates of Nain, He will surely raise thee whom He loves far more. Have ye not heard how He wakened the daughter of Jairus? Brother, He will come and quicken thee, and we shall have many happy hours yet, and we shall have this as a special love-token from our Master and our Lord, that He raised thee from the dead." But why, why was she not spared those bitter tears which ran scalding down her cheeks when she saw that her brother was really dead? She could not believe it. She kissed his forehead, and oh! how cold was that marble brow! She lifted up his hand—"He cannot be dead," said she, "for Jesus said this sickness was not unto death;" but the hand fell nerveless by her side: her brother was really a corpse, and putrefaction soon set in, and then she knew that the beloved clay was not exempt from all the dishonour which decay brings to the human body. Poor *Mary*! Jesus loved thee, it is said, but this is a strange way of showing His love. Where is He? Miles away He lingers. He knows thy brother is sick; yea, He knows that he is dead, and yet He abides still where He is. Oh! sorrowful mystery that the pity of such a tender Saviour should sink so far below their plumb-line to gauge, or His mercy should range so high beyond their power to reach.

Jesus is talking of the death of His friend, let us listen to His words; perhaps we may find the key to His actions in the words of His lips. How surprising! He does not say, "I regret that I have tarried so long." He does not say, "I ought to have hastened, but even now it is not too late." Hear, and marvel! Wonder of wonders, He says, "I am *glad* that I was not there." *Glad!* the word is out of place? Lazarus, by this time, stinketh in his tomb, and here is the Saviour glad! Martha and Mary are weeping their eyes out for sorrow, and yet their friend Jesus is glad! It is strange, it is passing strange! However, we may rest assured that Jesus knoweth better than we do, and our faith may therefore sit still and try to spell out His meaning, where our reason cannot find it at the first glance. "I am glad," saith He, "*for your sakes* that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." Ah! we see it now: Christ is not glad because of sorrow, but only on account of the result of it. He knew that this temporary trial would help His disciples to a greater faith, and He so prizes their growth in faith that He is even glad of the sorrow which occasions it. He does as good as say, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to prevent the trouble, for now that it is come, it will teach you to believe in me, and this shall be much better for you than to have been spared the affliction."

We have thus plainly before us the principle, that our Lord in His infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon His people's faith, that He will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. Let us try to press the wine of consolation from the cluster of the text. In three cups we will preserve the goodly juice as it flows forth from the winepress of meditation. First of all, brethren, Jesus Christ was glad that the trial had come, *for the*

strengthening of the faith of the apostles; secondly, for strengthening the faith of the family; and thirdly, for giving faith to others; for you find by the forty-fifth verse that the goblet passed round to sympathizing friends—“Many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.”

I. Jesus Christ designed the death of Lazarus and his after-resurrection FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES. This acted two ways: not only would *the trial itself* tend to strengthen their faith; but *the remarkable deliverance* which Christ gave to them out of it would certainly minister to the growth of their confidence in Him.

1. Let us at once observe that *the trial itself would certainly tend to increase the apostle's faith*. Faith untried may be true faith, but it is sure to be little faith. I believe in the existence of faith in men who have no trials, but that is as far as I can go. I am persuaded, brethren, that where there is no trial faith just draws breath enough to live, but that is all; for faith, like the fabled salamander, has fire for its native element. Faith never prospers so well as when all things are against her: tempests are trainers, and the lightnings are her illuminators. When a calm reigns on the sea, spread the sails as you will, the ship moves not to its harbour; for on a slumbering ocean the keel sleeps too. Let the winds come howling forth, and let the waters lift up themselves, then, though the vessel may rock, and her deck may be washed with waves, and her mast may creak under the pressure of the full and swelling sail, yet it is then that she makes headway towards her desired haven. No flowers wear so lovely a blue as those which grow at the foot of the frozen glacier; no stars so bright as those which glisten in the polar sky; no water so sweet as that which springs amid the desert sand; and no faith so precious as that which lives and triumphs in adversity. Thus saith the Lord, by the mouth of the prophet, “I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.” Now, why afflicted and poor? Because there is an adaptation in the afflicted and poor among the Lord's people, to trust in the Lord. He does not say, “I will leave in the midst of thee a prosperous and rich people, and they shall trust.” No! these scarcely seem to have such capacity for faith as the afflicted ones have. Rather I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they, by reason of their very affliction and poverty, shall be the more graciously disposed to repose their faith in the Lord. Untried faith is always small in stature; and it is likely to remain dwarfish so long as it is without trials. There is no room in the placid pools of ease for faith to gain leviathan proportions, she must dwell in the stormy sea if she would be one of the chief of the ways of God. Tried faith brings experience; and every one of you who are men and women of experience, must know that experience makes religion become more *real* to you. You never know either the bitterness of sin or the sweetness of pardon, till you have felt both. You never know your own weakness till you have been compelled to go through the rivers, and you would never have known God's strength had you not been supported amid the water-floods. All the talk about religion which is not based upon an experience of it, is mere talk. If we have little experience, we cannot speak so positively as those can whose experience has been more deep and profound. Once when I was preaching upon the faithfulness of God in time of trial in the earlier days of my ministry, my venerable grandfather was sitting in the pulpit behind me; he suddenly rose up and took my place, and coming to the front of the pulpit, said, “My grandson can preach this as a matter of theory, but I can tell you it as a matter of experience, for I have done business upon the great waters, and have seen the works of the Lord for myself.” There is an accumulation of force in the testimony of one who has personally passed through the things whereof others can only speak as though they had seen them in a map or in a picture. Travellers who write

from their easy chairs what they have seen from their bedchambers, may indite books to beguile the idle hours of those who stay at home; but he who is about to traverse regions full of danger, seeks a guide who has really trodden the road, The writer may excel in florid words, the veritable traveller has real and valuable wisdom. Faith increases in solidity, assurance, and intensity, the more she is exercised with tribulation, and the more she hath been cast down, and lifted up again. Let not this, however, discourage those who are young in faith. You will have trials enough without your seeking for them; the full portion will be measured out to you in due season. Meanwhile, if you cannot yet claim the result of long experience, thank God for what grace you have. Praise Him for that whereunto you have attained; walk according to that rule, and you shall yet have more and more of the blessing of God, till your faith shall remove mountains, and conquer impossibilities.

It may be asked, what is the method by which trial strengthens faith? We might answer in various ways. *Trial takes away many of the impediments of faith.* Carnal security is the worst foe to confidence in God. If I sit down and say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" faith's road is barricaded, but adversity sets the barn on a blaze, and "the much goods laid up for many years," cease to block up the path of faith. Oh, blessed axe of sorrow, which clears a pathway for me to my God by cutting down the thick trees of my earthly comforts! When I say, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved," the visible fortification, rather than the invisible protector, engages my attention; but when the great earthquake shakes the rocks, and the mountain is swallowed up, I fly to the immovable Rock of Ages to build my confidence on high. Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valour, and snaps the sinews of scared courage. The balloon never rises until the cords are cut: affliction doth this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortable in the husk it is useless to man, it must be threshed out of its resting-place before its value can be known. Trial plucks the arrow of faith from the repose of the quiver, and shoots it against the foe.

Nor is *affliction of small service to faith, when it exposes the weakness of the creature.* This trial would show the apostles that they must not depend upon the bounty of any one man, for though Lazarus may have entertained them and filled their little bag with food, yet Lazarus dies, and Mary may die, and Martha may die, and all friends must die, and this would teach them not to look to broken cisterns, but to fly to the ever-flowing fountain. Oh, dear friends, we are in much danger of making idols of our mercies! God gives us his temporal favours as refreshments by the way, and then straightway we kneel down and cry, "These by thy gods, O Israel." It is of the Lord's mercy that these idol-gods be broken in pieces. He blasts the gourds under which we sat in ample shade, in order that we may lift up our cry to Him, and trust in Him alone. The emptiness of the creature is a lesson we are so slow to learn, and we must have it whipped into us by the rod of affliction; but learned it must be, or else faith can never attain to eminence.

Furthermore, trial is of special service to faith when *it drives her to her God.* I make a sad confession, over which I mourn, that when my soul is happy and things prosper, I do not as a rule live so near to God as I do in the midst of shame and contempt, and casting down of spirit. O my God, how dear Thou art to my soul in the night; when the sun goeth down, Thou Bright and Morning Star, how sweetly dost Thou shine. When the world's bread is sugared and buttered, then we devour it till we grow sick; but when the world changes our diet, fills our mouth with vinegar, and makes our drink gall and wormwood, then we cry for the breasts of our dear God again. When the world's wells are full of sweet but poisonous water, we pitch our tents at the well's mouth, and drink again and again and forget the well of Bethlehem which is within the gate; but when earth's water becomes

bitter like the stream of Marah, then we turn away all sick and faint, and cry after the water of life, "Spring up, O well!" Thus afflictions fetch us to our God, as the barking dog drives the wandering sheep to the shepherd's hand.

And then *trial has a hardening effect upon faith*. As the Spartan lads were prepared for fighting by the sharp discipline of their boyish days, so are God's servants trained for war by the afflictions which He sends upon them in the early days of their spiritual life. We must run with footmen, or we shall never be able to contend with horses; we must be thrown into the water, or we shall never learn to swim; we must hear the whizzing of the bullets, or we shall never become veteran soldiers. The gardener knows that if his flowers were kept always under glass and fostered in a great temperature, when he might put them out, should there come a cold night they would quickly die; so he does not give them too much heat, but exposes them by degrees and gets them used to the cold, that they may stand in the open air; and thus the only wise God does not put His servants in hothouses and rear them delicately, but He exposes them to trial that they may know how to bear it when it comes. If you want to ruin your son, never let him know a hardship. When he is a child carry him in your arms, when he becomes a youth still dandle him, and when he becomes a man still dry-nurse him, and you will succeed in producing an arrant fool. If you want to prevent his being made useful in the world, guard him from every kind of toil. Do not suffer him to struggle. Wipe the sweat from his dainty brow and say, "Dear child, thou shalt never have another task so arduous." Pity him when he ought to be punished; supply all his wishes, avert all disappointments, prevent all troubles, and you will surely tutor him to be a reprobate and to break your heart. But put him where he must work, expose him to difficulties, purposely throw him into peril, and in this way you shall make him a man, and when he comes to do man's work and to bear man's trial, he shall be fit for either. My Master does not daintily cradle His children when they ought to run alone; and when they begin to run He is not always putting out His finger for them to lean upon, but He lets them tumble down to the cutting of their knees, because then they will walk more carefully by-and-by, and learn to stand upright by the strength which faith confers upon them.

You see, dear friends, that Jesus Christ was glad—glad that His disciples were blessed by trouble. Will you think of this, you who are so troubled this morning, Jesus Christ does sympathize with you, but still He does it wisely, and He says, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." He is glad that your business does not prosper; He is glad that you have those pains and aches, and that you have so weak a body, to the intent that you may believe. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you to take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant of grace.

2. But not to tarry here, let us notice that *the deliverance which Christ wrought by the resurrection of Lazarus, was calculated also to strengthen the faith of the apostles. At the worst Christ can work*. Why, what a plight were they now in! Here was a case which had come to the very worst. Lazarus is not merely dead—he has been buried; the stone has been rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre—worse than that, he had become putrid. Here are miracles so many, that I must describe the resurrection of Lazarus not as one miracle, but as a mass of wonders. We will not go into detail, but suffice it to say, we cannot suppose anything to be a more prodigious exhibition of the divine strength, than the restoration of health and life to a body through which the worms did creep and crawl; and yet in the very worst case Christ is not brought to a nonplus. Here was a case where human power evidently could do nothing. Now bring the viol and the harp, and let music

try its charms. Bring here, physician, thy most potent draught, now, for the true *aqua vitoe!* Now see what thou canst do. What! does the elixir fail? The physician turns away disgusted, for the stench may sooner destroy the physician's life, than he restore the corpse. Now, seek ye round the world and ask all men that are—Herod and his men-at-arms, and Caesar on the imperial throne—"Can you do anything here?" Nay, death sits with ghastly smile laughing at them all. "I have Lazarus," says he, "beyond your reach." Yet Jesus Christ wins the day.

Here *divine sympathy became most manifest*. Jesus wept when He thought of Lazarus and his weeping sisters. We do not find it often said that He wept. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," but those were precious and rare drops which He shed over that dead body. He could do no more when He thought of Jerusalem: He doth no less now that He thinks of Lazarus.

What an exhibition these disciples had of *the divine power* as well as the divine sympathy, for Christ does but say, "Lazarus, come forth," and death can hold his captive no longer. Forth from the charnel house he comes, restored to perfect health.

Do you not think that all this must tend to confirm the apostles' faith? It seems to me to be a part of the best education they could possibly receive for their future ministry. I think I see the apostles in after-time shut up in prison: they are condemned to die, but Peter comforts John by saying, "He can bring us out of prison: do you not remember how He brought Lazarus out of his grave? He can certainly appear for us and set us free." When they went forth to preach to sinners, how would they be strengthened by remembering these cases! Their hearers were debauched, depraved, immoral—the apostles went into the midst of the worst conditions of human nature, and yet they feared not for the result, for they knew that putrid Lazarus revived at Christ's word. Peter would argue, "Did not Christ restore Lazarus when his body was stinking and decayed? He can certainly bring the most reprobate hearts to the obedience of the truth, and raise the vilest of the vile to new life."

Many of the apostolic Churches were far gone; they had in them unworthy members; but this would not too much buffet the faith of the apostles, for they would say, "That same Christ Who raised up Lazarus, can make Sardis, and Pergamos, and Thyatira, yet to be a praise in the earth, and Churches which seem to be corrupt and foul in the nostrils of the Most High, may yet be made a brightness and glory, and a sweet-smelling savour unto him." I am persuaded that very often such a miracle as this would recur to them, and strengthen them in the times of their suffering and labour and make them able to bear afflictions, and even martyrdom itself, in confidence in Christ.

I will not, however, say more, because the thing seems obvious enough; only you must not forget the principle we are trying to bring out, that in the case of the apostles, Christ considered that for them to have strong faith was worth any cost. No matter what pangs it cost Mary and Martha, or in what grief it might involve Himself or His apostles, they must bear it, because the result was so exceedingly beneficial. The surgeon handles the knife without tears, sharp is the cut, but he knows it will cure. The mother puts the draught to the child's mouth, and the child cries, and heaves, and loathes the bitterness, but the mother says, "Drink it all up, my child," because she knows there is life in every drop. So Christ is glad for the apostles' sake that He is not there, to the intent that they may believe.

II. Jesus Christ had an eye also to THE GOOD OF THE FAMILY. Mary and Martha had faith, but it was not very strong, for they suspected Christ's *love* when they said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." There was a sort of under whisper—"Why wast Thou not here? Dost Thou love us? Wherefore then didst Thou tarry?" They certainly *doubted* His power.

Martha, when she could believe in the resurrection, but could not believe in the present resurrection for her brother; and when again she said, "He has been dead four days," had faith, but it was very weak. Christ therefore sent the trial to Mary and Martha for their sakes, and was glad to send it, to the intent that they might believe.

Observe, dear friends, that these were choice favourites of the Lord Jesus Christ. He loves all the elect. They were three *special favourites* upon whom very distinguishing regard was set, and therefore it was that He sent them a *special trial*. The lapidary, if he takes up a stone and finds that it is not very precious, will not spend much care in cutting it; but when he gets a rare diamond of the first water, then he will be sure to cut, and cut, and cut again. When the Lord finds a saint whom He loves—loves much—He may spare other men trials and troubles, but He certainly will not this well-beloved one. It is an awful thing to be a favourite of heaven. It is a thing to be sought after and to be rejoiced in; but remember, to be of the King's council-chamber is a thing involving such work for faith that flesh and blood might shrink from the painful blessing. The gardener gets a tree, and if it is but of a poor sort he will let it grow as it wills, and take what fruit comes from it naturally; but if it be of a very rare sort, he likes to have every bough in its proper place, so that it may bear well; and he often takes out his knife and cuts here and there, because, says he, "That is a favourite tree, and it is one which bears such fruit that I would have much from it, and would leave nothing whatever that would cause it detriment." You who are God's favourites must not marvel at trials, but rather keep your door wide open for them, and when they come in, say, "Hail, messenger of the King! the sound of thy Master's feet is behind thee; thou art welcome here, for thy Master sent thee."

Special trial was attended with a *special visit*. It may be that Christ would not have come to Bethany if Lazarus had not been dead; but as soon as there is a corpse in the house, there is Christ in the house too. O Christian, it shall be much for your comfort, and for the strengthening of your faith, if Christ comes to you in your troubles. I tell you, if you see no smiles in His face in your prosperity, you shall not be without them in your adversity. The Lord Jesus will go out of His way to see you. You know when a mother is most kind to her child: she lets it run about, and scarcely notices it when it is well; but when it cries. "My head, my head!" and when they take it to the mother and tell her it is ill, how tender she is over it! How all the blandishments of love and the caresses of affection are lavished upon the little sick one! It shall be so with you, and in receiving these special visits, you shall know yourself to be highly favoured above the rest.

This special visit was attended with *special fellowship*. Jesus wept—wept with them that wept. Ah! you shall have Jesus sitting by the bedside, and weeping with you when you are sick. You may be well, and strong, and have but little fellowship with Christ, but He shall make all your bed in your sickness. Though you might walk along the green sward without the Saviour, when you come into the midst of the fire, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, you shall not be without Him then. I witness that there is no fellowship with Christ so near and sweet, as that which comes to us when we are in deep trials. Then the Master unbosoms Himself, and takes His child, not upon His knee, but to His very heart, and bids him lay his head upon His beating bosom. Christ will reveal His secrets to you when the world is against you, and trials surround you. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant;" but they shall never have such discoveries of that secret and that covenant, as when they most need it, in the darkest and most trying times. There are special loves, special trials, special visits, and special fellowship.

And soon you shall have *special deliverance*. In days to come you will talk about these trials. You will say, I fretted myself, and worried over it, but oh, if I could have seen the end as well as the beginning, I should have said—

“Sweet affliction! sweet affliction!

Thus to bring my Saviour near.”

I tell you, you will sit yet under your own vine, and under your own fig-tree, and talk to the poor tried saints, and say, “Do not be cast down, for *I* cried unto the Lord and He heard *me*, and delivered me from all my fears.” Perhaps in heaven this will help to make a part of your happiness, to remember God’s love to you in your tribulations—

“There on a green and flowery mount

Our weary souls shall sit,

And with transporting joys recount,

The labours of our feet.”

Shall we not tell to angels, and principalities, and powers, the faithfulness of Christ? We will tell all heaven that “His love was strong as death, and His jealousy as cruel as the grave” “many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it.” What sayest thou, my friend, thou who are under the smarting rod? Wilt thou murmur any more? Wilt thou repine against it any more? I beseech you, rather take my text, and read it the other way say—God help thee to say it—“I am glad that my God did not deliver me, because the trial has strengthened my faith. I thank His name that He has done me the great favour to permit me to carry the heavy end of His cross. I thank my Father that He hath not left me unchastised, for ‘Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word.’ ‘It is good for me that I have been afflicted.’ ” I tell you, this is the shortest way out of your troubles, as well as the most profitable spirit while you are in them. The Lord generally stays the rod when He finds His child receiving it as a favour. When thou art agreed with God’s rod, then that rod will have no further quarrel with thee. When thou canst look into the Father’s eyes, and say, “Thy will be done,” then His afflicting hand has done its work.

III. Now I come to the third point, and here may God the Holy Spirit bless the word. This trouble was permitted for GIVING FAITH TO OTHERS.

I shall address myself chiefly to those who cannot say they are God’s people, but who have some desire towards Christ. It is very likely you have had some great trouble in your life, and looking back, you wish you had never had it; but my Lord, who knows better than you do, says “I am glad for your sakes that I did not spare you that trouble, to the intent that you may be led to believe.” Know assuredly that *afflictions often lead men to faith in Christ because they give space for thought*. The man was strong and hale and hearty, and went on working from day to day, and never had a thought about God. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib;” but he did not know, he did not care. He left all thoughts of eternity to those who were silly enough to be religious, but for him—what did it matter to him? Death was a long way off, and besides, if it were not, he had not the time to think about it. An accident occurred; he had to lie upon his bed, and at first he fretted and fumed, but it could not be altered, and there in the ward of the hospital he groaned through many a weary hour at night. What could he think of? Why then the man began to think of himself, of his condition before God, of what would be his lot if he should die. When his life trembled like the even balance, and not one could tell which way it would turn, the man was forced to consider. Many a soul has been ploughed in the hospital, and then has been sown in the sanctuary.

Many a man has been first brought to God by the loss of a limb, or by long sickness, or by deep poverty.

Afflictions lead men to faith full often *by preventing sin*. A young man had resolved to climb a mountain: he had determined against good advice to reach the summit, though one far older than himself had warned him of the danger. He had not proceeded far up the mountain-side before a thick mist surrounded him. He was alarmed. The mist was so thick he could scarcely see his own hand. He retraced his steps following the way by which he came, and returned sorrowfully to his father's house, telling him that he had been in great peril. His father said he was glad of it; for if he had not met with that peril, he might have advanced a little farther, and fallen, never to rise again. Often trouble puts men out of temptation. They would have gone into bad company, to drunkenness, or lust, but they could not. The appointment was made—ah! the very night was set apart, but the black hand of God's kind angel came—I said a black hand, for so it seemed, and the man could not do what he had wished to do, and so his course was checked, and this in the hand of God was the means of bringing him to faith.

Troubles, again, often bring men to believe in Jesus because they compel them *to stand face to face with stern realities*. Did you ever lie upon the edge of death for a week? Did you ever lie with your body racked with pains, listening for the physician's whispers, and knowing that they amounted to this, that there were ninety-nine chances to one that you could not possibly recover? Did you ever feel that death was near? Did you ever peer into eternity with anxious eyes? Did you ever picture hell and think yourself there? Did you ever lie awake, and think of heaven and yourself shut out of it? Ah! it is in such times as these that God's Holy Spirit works great things for the sons of men. Hence Christ is glad when they are brought very low, when their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they cry unto God in their trouble. He is glad because this is the stepping-stone to real and genuine trust in Him, and so to eternal life. It is much better to lose an eye or a hand than to lose your soul—better to go to heaven poor and ragged, than to go to hell rich—better to melt into heaven by the process of consumption than it were to go down to hell with bones filled with marrow, and sinews full of strength. Glory be to God for the trials and troubles some of us have had, if they have been the means of bringing us to Christ.

Trials *tend to make men believe in Christ when they are followed by deliverances*. Perhaps some of you have been raised from a sick bed, or you have been helped over a time of temporal distress. Well, have you no gratitude? Do you not love God for His goodness? Does not your heart melt towards the Lord, for the kind deeds He has done to you? Have you no song of praise for His name? I have known many who have said, "Now that God has been pleased to raise me up and help me in this way, I will give Him my heart; what can I do for Him who has done so much for me?" Gratitude, I doubt not, has led many to put their trust in Christ. Besides, if you sought God and asked for help in time of trouble, and He did help you, this will tend to encourage you to pray again. If He helped you then, He will help you now; if He spared your life, why will He not spare your soul? If God has been pleased to lift you up from the grave, why may He not also deliver you from the pit of hell? I bless God there are many in this Church who were led to seek the Lord through answers to prayer. God was gracious to them in their distress; His mercy listened to their prayer; the blessing came, and the result is, that they cry unto Him, and will cry as long as they live.

If once we have prevailed with God, and believing in God we have had some deliverance, this I hope will be overruled to make us trust God for everything in the future. Remember that the one thing needful for eternal life is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. I know you will tell me you cannot

be perfect. No, I know you cannot. You will say, "I have many sins; I have done much that is wrong." It is true, most true, but he who believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ has his sins forgiven. You know the story—Christ came down from heaven and took His people's sins upon His own shoulders. When God came forth to smite the sinner, Justice said, "Where is he?" and Christ came and stood in the sinner's place, and God's sword went through the Saviour's heart. Why? That it might never cut nor wound the heart of those for whom Jesus died. Did He die for you? He did, if you believe in Him; your faith will be to you the evidence that Christ was substitute for you, and oh! if Christ suffered for you, you cannot suffer. If God punished Christ He will never punish you. If Jesus Christ paid your debts, you are free. Before God's throne today, if thou believest, thou art as clear as the angels in heaven. Thou art a saved soul if thou art resting upon the atonement of Christ, and thou mayst go thy way and sing—

"Now, freed from sin, I walk at large,
The Saviour's blood's my full discharge;
At His dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

If this be the result of your affliction, Christ may well say, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to stop the trouble, to the intent that ye may believe." May God bring you to faith for Jesus' sake. Amen.

“Thus Saith The Lord:” Or, The Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary

A Sermon

(No. 591)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, Spetember 25th, 1864, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Thus saith the Lord.”—Ezekiel 11:15.

THE WISE MAN saith, “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” What power must there be where there is the word of the King of kings, who ruleth over all! We are not left to conjecture as to the power of the divine word, for we know that “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” Out of nothingness the glorious creation leaped at the bidding of the Most High, and when the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, there was nothing wanted but that solemn voice, “Light be,” and straightway light was. God’s word was sufficient in itself to build the temple of the universe and to finish it from its foundations to its pinnacles. That same word upholdeth by its power, and ruleth all things by its might. The pillars of heaven stand because the divine word hath fixed them upon their bases, nor shall they be shaken until that same almighty word shall bid them remove; then as a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave which bears it and is gone forever, so shall the whole creation melt away. His word, which created, shall also destroy; but until that word be spoken every atom of this world is imperishable. Consider, my brethren, what power is concentrated in him who is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and whose name is “THE WORD OF GOD.” With what glorious power our Lord Jesus Christ uplifted the burden of our sins, carried the load up to the tree, and cast it forever into the Red Sea of his own atoning blood! Ye know how he burst the bars of death, tore away the gates of the grave, overthrew all the hosts of hell, and dragged the mightiest principalities of darkness as captives at his chariot wheels. At this day the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Heaven and earth salute him as the Omnipotent Word. He sustains the spiritual life of all his people by feeding them upon himself; and he shall in due time perfect his saints, and present them without spot before his Father’s throne. We ought, therefore, to bow with reverence to that which is truly the word of God, since it contains within itself the highest degree of power, and is ever the way in which divine omnipotence manifests itself.

It is in the word that we must find wisdom and power, “because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” The faintest whisper of Jehovah’s voice should fill us with a solemn awe, and command the deepest obedience of our souls. Brethren, how careful should we be that we do not set up in God’s temple anything in opposition to his word, that we do not permit the teachings of a creature to usurp the honor due to the Lord alone! “Thus saith antiquity,” “thus saith authority,” “thus saith learning,” “thus saith experience,”—these be but idol-gods, which defile the temple of God; be it yours and mine, as bold iconoclasts, to dash them in pieces without mercy, seeing that they usurp the place of the word of God.

“Thus saith the Lord”—this is the motto of our standard, the war-cry of our spiritual conflict,—the sword with which we hope yet to smite through the loins of the mighty who rise up against God’s truth. Nothing shall stand before this weapon in the day when God cometh out of his hiding-place; for even at this hour, when “Thus saith the Lord” sounds from the trumpet of the Lord’s ministers, the hosts of Midian begin to tremble; for well they know the might of that terrible watchword in days of yore.

This morning, I shall first endeavor to show, briefly, *the value of a “Thus saith the Lord;”* and then, secondly, I shall, with as much calmness of spirit as I can command, *request a “Thus saith the Lord” for certain things which are received and practiced in the State Establishment of our land,* and close with *a word of personal application,* beseeching you to seek a “Thus saith the Lord” for any hopes which you may entertain of being partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE VALUE OF A “THUS SAITH THE LORD.”

1. Our *first* observation is that it is *the minister’s message*. If he be God’s minister, he does not found his teaching upon his own authority, for then his message would be only that of himself, and not to be esteemed; but he shows the authority of his Master, and none can gainsay him. He claims men’s attention on the ground that he utters a “Thus saith the Lord.” No matter how aged he may be, he does not proclaim the truth as merely the result of his long investigations or his extraordinary experience, but he grounds it upon “Thus saith the Lord.” So spake the hoary-headed Joshua when for many a year he had known the faithfulness of God, and was about to die. He was singing his swan-song, preaching his last sermon; but he did not commence it, “Thus saith my age,” “Thus say I upon mine own authority,” but “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel.” A God-sent minister is the ambassador of the Most High, but he has no right to go beyond his commission; and when he does so, his office cannot yield him support. The prophets of God did not say, “Thus I speak as a prophet,” but, “Thus saith the Lord.” When the prophet came in Gideon’s days and spoke to erring Israel, he opened his mouth with, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel.” Turn to the pages of Isaiah, and mark how frequent he quotes the divine authority; study the plaintive words of Jeremiah, and observe how solemnly his prophetic woes are prefaced with, “Thus saith the Lord;” and the soaring Ezekiel, to whom was given, as it were, six wings, that he might take more lofty flights than the eagle knoweth—even he relied not upon the sublimity of his language or the glory of his imagery, but found the sinews of his strength in “Thus saith the Lord God.” This is the trowel and this the hammer of God’s builders,—this the trumpet of his watchmen and the sword of his warriors. Woe to the man who comes in any other name! If we, or an angel from heaven, shall preach unto you anything but a “Thus saith the Lord,” no matter what our character or standing, give no heed to us, but cleave unto the truth as it is in Jesus. To the law and to the testimony, if we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us. That test which we demand to be exercised upon others we cheerfully consent to be exercised upon ourselves, praying that we may have grace to forsake our errors as we would have other men forsake theirs.

2. “Thus saith the Lord” is *the only authority in God church*. When the tabernacle was pitched in the wilderness, what was the authority for its length and breadth? Why was the altar of incense to be placed here, and the brazen laver there? Why so many lambs or bullocks to be offered on a certain day? Why must the Passover be roasted whole and not sodden? Simply and only because God had shown all these things to Moses in the holy mount; and thus had Jehovah spoken, “Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.” It is even so in the church at the present day; true servants of God demand to see for all church ordinances and doctrines

the express authority of the church's only Teacher and Lord. They remember that the Lord Jesus bade the apostles to teach believers to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them; but he neither gave to them nor to any man power to alter his own commands. The Holy Ghost revealed much of precious truth and holy precept by the apostles, and to his teaching we would give earnest heed; but when men cite the authority of fathers and councils and bishops, we give place for subjection? no, not for an hour. They may quote Irenaeus or Cyprian, Augustine or Chrysostom; they may remind us of the dogmas of Luther or Calvin; they may find authority in Simeon, Wesley, or Gill—we will listen to the opinions of those great men with the respect which they deserve *as men*; but having so done, we deny that we have anything to do with these men as authorities in the church of God: for there nothing has any authority but "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts." Yea, if you shall bring us the concurrent consent of all tradition—if you shall quote precedents venerable with fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen centuries of antiquity—we burn the whole as so much worthless lumber, unless you put your finger upon the passage of Holy Writ which warrants the matter to be of God. You may further plead, in addition to all this venerable authority, the beauty of the ceremony, and its usefulness to those who partake therein, but this is all foreign to the point; for to the true church of God the only question is this: Is there a "Thus saith the Lord" for it? And if divine authority be not forthcoming, faithful men thrust forth the intruder as the cunning craftiness of men.

3. "Thus saith the Lord" *is the most fitting word of rebuke for erring saints*. God's people when they err, if they be rebuked, even though it should be in the gentlest manner, are too apt to resent the rebuff; but when we can come to them with "Thus saith the Lord," if there be a spark of spiritual life left, it is sure to catch at this flame. When the man of God came to Eli, how Eli's heart trembled when he began, "Thus saith the Lord," and described to him the doom of his house, because his sons had made themselves vile, and he had not restrained them. David the king might have been moved to anger against Nathan for that personal parable and pungent application; but his anger was stayed, nay, better still, his heart was broken, because the prophet could say, "Thus saith the Lord." My dear brethren in Christ, you and I have often risen in anger at the intrusive proofs of ignorant men; but I hope we have far more often felt the melting power of a "Thus saith the Lord." When the heart is right, the word of God sweetly melts us, as the breath of the south wind melts the frozen rivers.

4. "Thus saith the Lord" *is the only solid ground of comfort to God's people*. Where can a child of God find true solace apart from that which cometh out of the mouth of the Most High! Truly, "Man doth not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live;" "Thy words were found, and I did eat them;" "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" When Nathan came to tell David of the covenant which the Lord would make with him and his house, David would scarcely have believed so great a mercy to be really his if the prophet had not begun with "Thus saith the Lord." It was not "Thus saith Nathan," or "Thus do the ancients say," but "Thus saith *the Lord*;" and David's heart was full of holy joy when he saw the covenant to be ordered in all things and sure. When Hezekiah lay sick unto death, he turned his face to the wall and prayed; but there was no comfort to the royal suppliant until the prophet came with "Thus saith the Lord;" and when Sennacherib was about to besiege Jerusalem, and Lachish had fallen, Hezekiah prayed, and the people with him; but oh! they could not think it possible that there should be a hook put into the jaw of the mighty Assyrian, and that he should be turned back by the way in which he came, till the prophet reassured their hearts with a "Thus saith the Lord." Zion's sons and daughters feast upon the sure word of their faithful God.

Brethren, I need not enlarge here, for I hope most of you know the preciousness of a divine promise. There is nothing wanted to stay your soul in your worst troubles but the Word of God applied with power. God may not send you a friend; he may not raise up a deliverer; but if he shall only give you to believe his Word, that shall be enough for you. Martin Luther said: "I have covenanted with my Lord that he should not send me visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am content with this one gift of the Scriptures, which abundantly teaches and supplies all that is necessary, both for this life and that which is to come." O Lord, only feed me on thy Word, and I will not envy kings their delicacies, nor even the angels around thy throne the bread of heaven on which they live.

5. Yet again: "Thus saith the Lord" is that *with which we must confront the Lords enemies*. When Moses went in before Pharaoh, the words which he used were not, "The elders of Israel have consulted, and thus have they bidden me say," not "Our Father Abraham once said, and his words have been handed to us by long tradition"—such talk would have been readily resisted; but he confronted the haughty monarch with "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go;" and it was the power of this divine word which rained plagues upon the fields of Zoan, and brought forth the captives, with silver and gold. Pharaoh might boast, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" but ere long he knew that Jehovah's word was mightier than all the horsemen and chariots of Mizraim, and was not to be resisted without terrible defeat. To this day, if we would break sinners' hearts, our hammer must be "Thus saith the Lord;" and if we would woo them to obedience to King Jesus, our reasons must come from his own Word. I have often noticed in conversion, that, though sometimes a particular passage of the sermon may be quoted by the converted person as the means of enlightenment, yet in the majority of cases it is the text, or some passage of Scripture, quoted during the sermon, which is blessed to do the work. McCheyne says, "Depend upon it, it is God's Word, not our comment upon God's Word, that saves souls;" and so it is. Let us use much of Scripture, much of the pure silver of sacred revelation, and no human alloy. "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?"

6. To close this point. Such an authority has a "Thus saith the Lord," that *it is not to be despised without entailing upon the offender the severest penalty*. Samuel came to Saul with "Thus saith the Lord," and bade him destroy the Amalekites. He was utterly to cut them off, and not to spare so much as one of them. But Saul saved the best of the cattle and the sheep, and brought home Agag; and what was the result? His kingdom was taken from him and given to a neighbor of his that was better than he; and because he exalted himself beyond measure to do otherwise than according to the letter of God's command, he was put away forever from having dominion over Israel. And mark this word: if any church in Christendom shall continue, after light is given and after plain rebuke is uttered, to walk contrary to the word of God, and to teach that which is inconsistent with Holy Scripture, as Saul was put away from the kingdom, so shall that church be put away from before the Lord of Hosts; and if any man, be he who he may, after receiving light from on high, continues willfully to shut his eyes, he shall not, if an heir of heaven, be rejected from eternal salvation, but he shall be cast off from much of the usefulness and comfort which he might otherwise have enjoyed. He knew his Master's will, and did it not: he shall be beaten with many stripes. He has been as the horse or the mule which have no understanding, and his mouth shall be held in with bit and bridle. Many sorrows shall be to those who dare to dash themselves against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler by opposing his "Thus saith the Lord." Upon whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder; and whosoever shall fall upon it shall be broken, to his own lasting damage. O my brethren! I would that we trembled and stood more in awe of God's word. I fear me

that many treat the things of God as though they were merely matters of opinion, but remember that opinion cannot govern in God's house. God's word, not man's opinion, claims your allegiance. Remember that although our ignorant conscience may not accuse us of error, yet if we walk contrary to God's word, our conscientiousness does not screen us from sin; for conscience is not the sovereign arbiter of right and wrong, but the plain word of God is the rule of equity. I do not sin so foully as if I sinned against my conscience, but I still sin, if, having an unenlightened conscience, I ignorantly transgress. But if I wilfully keep my conscience in darkness, and continue in errors which I might easily know to be such by a little thought and searching of God's word, then my conscience can offer me no excuse, for I am guilty of blindfolding the guide which I have chosen, and then, knowing him to be blindfolded, I am guilty of the folly of letting him lead me into rebellion against God. O church of God! hear thou the voice of thy great Founder and Lord: "Whosoever, therefore shall one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Oh for a stern integrity, that will hold the word, and will never depart from it, come what may. This much concerning the value of a "Thus saith the Lord."

II. Dear friends, the second part of our subject may be very displeasing to some who have strayed in here, but that I cannot help. I do not remember ever asking any one to come and hear me, and therefore, as you come of your own wills, when I have any truth to speak, I shall not conceal it because you choose to be present. At the present crisis, I feel that it is woe unto me if I do not lift up my voice like a trumpet, and urge with all my might the necessity of reformation in our State Church. I have, moreover, an excellent excuse for the inquiry I am about to make; for as I am publicly charged with ignorance, it is at once my duty and my privilege to seek instruction of those who claim authority to teach. When one is known to be profoundly ignorant, and there are certain fathers in the faith who have the power to instruct, the least thing that can be allowed us is to ask questions, and the smallest boon we can expect is to have them answered by men expressly ordained to instruct the ignorant.

The Rev. W. Goode, the Dean of Ripon, appears to be much better acquainted with the extent of my reading and mental acquirements than I am myself. He speaks with all the positiveness of a personal acquaintance concerning my reputed ignorance, and for my own part I am not at all anxious to question so very reverend an authority. He writes: "As to that young minister who is now raving against the Evangelical clergy on this point, it is to be regretted that so much notice has been taken of his railings. He is to be pitied, because his entire want of acquaintance with theological literature leaves him utterly unfit for the determination of such a question; which is a question, not of more doctrine, but of what may be called historical theology; and his charges are just a parallel to those which the Romanists would bring against himself as well as others for the interpretation of the words, 'This is my body.' But were he a wiser man than he is, he would know better what his qualifications are for passing Judgment on such a point, and be willing to learn from such facts, among others, as the Gorham Judgment and the cases of Mr. Maskell and Mr. Mozley, what ground there is for his charges against the Evangelical clergy. Let him hold and enforce his own view of doctrine as he pleases; but when he undertakes to determine what is the exclusive meaning of the Book of Common Prayer, and brings a charge of dishonesty against those who take a different view of that meaning from what he does, he only shows the presumptuous self-confidence with which he is prepared to pronounce judgment upon matters of which he is profoundly ignorant. To hold a

controversy with him upon the subject would be to as little purpose as to attempt to hold a logically-constructed argument with a child unacquainted with logical terms.”

When this paragraph caught my eye, my heart leaped with joy, for I knew that the sinners in Zion were afraid; and I thought I heard a voice crying from the Word, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.” My mind flew back to the valley of Elah, and I remembered the words of the old record: “And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.” My spirit kindled at these words of the boastful champion of yore, and at their modern reproduction by the vainglorious divine of Ripon, and the answer of David was in my heart as it is even now upon my tongue: “Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands.” Admitting the witness of the venerable dean to be correct, and that “the young minister” is inexpert in logic, I am not therefore ashamed; far otherwise, I will the rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me; “for when I am weak, then am I strong.” Take, O ye great ones of the earth, every profit that can be made out of your belief in my utter total ignorance, and your own profound and extensive learning, and then go your ways, and learn what this meaneth: “Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee: thou shalt not know from whence it riseth.. And now at this hour, having been condemned as intolerably ignorant, I feel I have the liberty to ask just a few explanations of those reverend divines who do know or ought to know the grounds of their faith and practice.

1. I open this little book,—the Prayer-Book, of whose occasional services the more I know the less I approve,—and I find in the *Baptismal Service*, that when little children are brought to be sprinkled, certain godfathers and godmothers promise for them that they shall renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, etc., and that they shall obediently keep all God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life. To me it seems that they might as well promise that the infants should grow up with Roman noses, auburn hair, and blue eyes; for they are just as able to make them do the one as the other. I shall not however intrude my opinion further, but simply ask whether there is a “Thus saith the Lord” for any man’s standing proxy for a babe, and making such promises in its name?—in other words, I ask for apostolical, prophetic, or any other form of scriptural precept, or precedent, for the use of proxies in baptism. True religion is a personal matter—is its first manifestation in regeneration to be connected with the impossible promises of others? Plain proof-texts are requested for godfathers and godmothers; and such important persons deserve to be defended by the clergy, if texts of Scripture can be discovered. As I cannot imagine where the texts will be found, I must pause till the learned shall produce them. Further, I find that these children

enter into a covenant by proxy, of which we are assured that *the promise* our Lord Jesus will for *his* part most surely keep and perform; but the children are bound to do *their* part—that part being something more than the gigantic task of keeping all the commandments of God. Now I ask for a “Thus saith the Lord” for such a covenant as this. I find two covenants in the Word of God: one is the covenant of works, “This do, and thou shalt live;” I find another, the covenant of grace, which runs only in this wise, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” I find it expressly declared that there cannot be a mixture of works and grace; for, says Paul, “If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work;” and I ask a “Thus saith the Lord” for this baptismal covenant, which is nominally of grace, but really of works, or at best an unnatural conglomerate of grace and works. I ask those who have searched Scripture through, to find me the form or the command for any baptismal covenant whatever. It is idle to say that such a covenant was allowed among the early Christians; their witness is not earlier enough for us: we want a “Thus saith the Lord,” and nothing but this will justify this pretended covenant.

We then find that after this covenant has been made, and the water has been applied in a manner which we think needs also a “Thus saith the Lord” to justify it, it is publicly declared that the babe is regenerated,—“Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren that this child is regenerated 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.” And, again, “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,” etc. We are told we do not understand the meaning of “regeneration” as it is used in the services of the Anglican Church. The meaning of this passage is historical, hypothetical, ecclesiastical, and we know not what. The words “to be born again” did not formerly seem to us to be so very difficult to understand, nor do they appear so now as they stand in Scripture; for we find in them the one regeneration which has renewed us in the spirit of our mind, and we cannot consent to use those words in any other sense. Well, whether regeneration be or be not a very equivocal word, we simply ask, Is there a “Thus saith the Lord” for the assertion that a sprinkled infant is therefore regenerate in any sense in the world? Will any person find us a text of Scripture?—he shall have large rewards from clergymen with uneasy consciences! We put our inquiry again in plain terms, Will some one oblige us with a plain “Thus saith the Lord” proving that water baptism in any one instance makes an unconscious babe a member of Christ and a child of God, in any sense which any sane person chooses to attach to those words? Where is the passage—where? Echo answers “where?” But this subject you have been considering for some time, and are well convinced that the process of regenerating babies by occult influences conveyed by water is a pure—no, an impure—invention of priest-craft. There is therefore no necessity that I enlarge upon a point so well understood.

2. I have a second question to ask. There is prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer a peculiar ceremony called *confirmation*. I do not remember to have read of that in Scripture. I would like to have a “Thus saith the Lord” for that rite. As I am ready to yield as far as possible, suppose we take it for granted that this ceremony is defensible from Holy Writ, I would like to know whether there is any “Thus saith the Lord” allowing a person called a bishop to give to the assembled youths an assurance of divine favor by laying his hands on their heads? The bishop having laid his hands on every head presented to him, whether it be gracious or graceless, talks thus in the Collect, “Almighty

and everliving God, who makest us both to will and to do those things that be good and acceptable unto thy divine majesty, we make our humble supplications unto thee for *these thy servants upon whom (after the example of thy holy apostles) we have now laid our hands, to certify them (by this sign) of thy favor and gracious goodness towards them.*” Does this mean that the bishop’s hand certifies the person touched thereby of special divine favor? So it seems to teach, as far as I can see. We want, then, a “Thus saith the Lord,” authorizing this individual in lawn to exercise the office of an apostle! We then desire scriptural warrant permitting him to certify these kneeling youths of the enjoyment or possession of any particular divine favor by putting his hands on their heads. If this means the common goodness of God, the bishop’s hands are not needed to certify them of that; but as he has already declared in prayer that they were regenerated by water and the Spirit, and had been forgiven all their sins, it is clear that special favor is intended; we inquire, therefore, for his authority for giving these young people a further certificate of special divine favor by the imposition of his hands. Why *his* hands? Who is he that he can certify these persons of God’s favor more than any other man? Where is his scriptural warrant to confer by his hands a certificate of grace upon young people who in innumerable cases are thoughtless and unconverted, if not profane? We want a “Thus saith the Lord” for the whole thing, and then for each item in detail. Endless is the task thus proposed to the honest Churchman.

3. Another matter needs a little clearing up; and, as this Book was set forth by learned divines and bishops, I would like a lucid explanation. The priest visits a sick man, sits down by his bed-side, reads certain prayers, bids the patient remember his baptism, questions him as to his creed, gives him good advice about forgiving his enemies and making his will, moves him to make a special confession of his sin if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, after which confession the Rubric says “the priest shall absolve him” (if he humbly and heartily desire it), after this sort. Here is the absolution, and I humbly and heartily desire a “Thus saith the Lord” for it: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and *by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*” Sir Priest, I want you to give me a plain warrant from God’s Word for your absolving my dying neighbor at this rate. Who are you that you should use such words? The season is solemn: it is the hour of death, and the matter is weighty, for it concerns the eternal interests of the dying man, and may—nay, will, if you be found to be acting presumptuously in this matter—involve your own soul in eternal ruin. Whence did you derive your right to forgive that sick man? Might he not raise his withered hands and return the compliment by absolving you? Are you quite sure as to the committal of divine authority to you? Then show me the deed of gift, and let it be clearly of divine origin. The apostles were empowered to do many things; but who are you? Do you claim to be their successors? Then work miracles similar to theirs; take up serpents, and drink deadly things without being harmed thereby; prove to us that you have seen the Lord, or even that cloven tongues of fire have sat upon each of you. You evangelical clergy, dare you claim to be successors of the apostles, and to have power to forgive sins? Your Puseyite brethren go the whole length of superstitious pretension; but you have too much light to be so superstitious; and yet you do what is quite as wicked,—you solemnly subscribe that this absolution is not contrary to the Word of God when you know it is? Gorham case, say you. I care nothing for your Gorham case: I want a “Thus saith the Lord” warranting you to swear to what you know to be false and dangerous. Mr. Mozley and Mr.

Maskell may give you all the comfort which they can afford; but one word of Peter or of Paul would be of more weight in this matter than a thousand words from either of them.

You are aware, perhaps, that it is not every man who is permitted by the Established religion to pronounce this absolution. A person called a “deacon” is, I am informed, allowed to preach and do a great many things, but when he reads the Book of Common Prayer in the daily service he must not grant absolution; there is a supernatural something which the man has not yet received, for he has only once felt the episcopal imposition of hands. We shall see, by-and-by, where absolving power comes from. The deacon has attained to one grade of priestcraft, but the full vigor of mystic influence rests not upon him. Another touch, another subscription, and the keys of St. Peter will swing at his girdle; but his time is not yet. I ask him, whether he calls himself a deacon or a priest, where he gets a “Thus saith the Lord” for this absolution? which, if it be not of God, is a piece of impertinence, superstition, blasphemy, and falsehood.

4. I turn on and find that when the sick dies he is buried in consecrated ground; and though he may have cut his throat while under *delirium tremens*, if the jury do not return a verdict of suicide, the priest shall say, as he casts earth upon the body, “Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground,—earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,—in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.” And again, “We give thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world.” And yet again, “We meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from he death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth.” We beg a “Thus saith the Lord” for burying every baptized thief, harlot, rogue, drunkard, and liar who may die in the parish—“in sure and certain hope of the blessed resurrection.” “Oh! it is commanded by authority.” What authority? We challenge it, and permit none to pass muster but a “Thus saith the Lord.” Until clergymen will bring us scriptural warrant for uttering falsehoods over a grave, we dare not cease our testimony against them. How long will the many godly laymen in that Church remain quiet? Why do they not bestir themselves, and demand revision or disruption?

5. Turning a little further on, into a part of the Prayer-Book not much frequented by ordinary readers, we come to the “*Ordering of Priests*,” or the way in which priests are made. Why *priests*? Is one believer more a priest than another, when all are styled a royal priesthood? Let that pass. Of course, brethren, the priests are made by the bishops, as the bishops are made by Lord Palmerston, or Lord Derby, or any other political leader who may be in office. The Prime Minister of England is the true fountain from whom all bishops flow, and the priests are minor emanations branching off from the mitre rather than the crown. Here is the way of ordering priests. Let heaven and earth hear this and be astonished: “When this prayer is done, the bishop with the priests present shall lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of priesthood; the receivers humbly kneeling upon their knees, and the bishop saying, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost.’” Listen to it, now! Think you behold the scene: a man of God, a bishop whom you have been in the habit of considering a most gracious, godly man, and such no doubt he may be, in a sort,—think you see him putting his hands upon the head of some evangelical man whom you will go and hear, or, if you like, upon some young rake fresh from Oxford,—and think you hear him say, “*Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.*” We want a “Thus saith the Lord” for that; for that is putting it rather

strongly in the popish line, one would think. Is the way of ordering priests in the Church of Rome much worse than this? That the apostles did confer the Holy Ghost, we never thought of denying; but that Oxford, Exeter, or any other occupants of the bench can give the Holy Spirit, needs some proof other than their silk aprons or lawn sleeves can afford us. We ask, moreover, for one instance in which an apostle conferred upon any minister the power to forgive sins, and where it can be found in Scripture that any man other than an apostle ever received authority to absolve sinners. Sirs, let us say the truth; however much yonder priest may pretend at his parishioner's bedside to forgive sin, the man's sins are not forgiven; and the troubled conscience of the sinner often bears witness to the fact, as the day of judgment and the fearful hell of sinners must also bear witness. And what think you, sirs, must be the curse that fills the mouth of damned souls, when in another world they meet the priest who absolved them with this sham absolution! With what reproaches will such deceived ones meet the priest who sent them down to perdition with a lie in their right hands! Will they not say to him, "Thou didst forgive me all my sins by an authority committed unto thee, and yet here am I cast into the pit of hell?" Oh! if I do not clear my Soul upon this infamous business, and if the whole Christian church does not cleanse herself of it, what guilt will lay upon us! This is become a crying evil, and a sin that is not to be spoken of behind the door, nor to be handled in gentle language. I have been severe, it is said, and spoken harshly. I do not believe it possible to be too severe in this matter; but, sirs, if I have been so, let that be set down as my sin if you will; but is there any comparison between my fault and that of men who know this to be contrary to the Word of God, and yet give it their unfeigned assent and consent? or the sin of those who can lie unto the Holy Ghost, by pretending to confer Him who bloweth where he listeth upon men who as likely as not are as graceless as the very heathen? Fresh from the dissipations of college-life, the sinner bows before the man in lawn, and rises a full-blown priest, fully able to remit or retain sins. After this, how can the priests of the Church of England denounce the Roman Catholics? It is so very easy to fume and bluster against Puseyites and Papists; but the moment our charity begins at home, and we give our Evangelical brethren the same benefit which they confer upon the open Romanists, they are incensed beyond measure. Yet will we tell them to their faces, that they, despite their fair speeches, are as guilty as those whom they denounce; for there is as much Popery in this priest-making as in any passage in the mass-book. Protestant England! wilt thou long tolerate this blasphemy? Land of Wiclif, birthplace of the martyrs of Smithfield, is this long to be borne with? I am clear of this matter before the Most High, or hope to be, ere I sleep in the grave; and having once sounded the trumpet, it hall ring till my lips are dumb. Do you tell me it is no business of mine? Is it not the *National* Church?—does not its sin rest, therefore, upon every man and woman in the nation, Dissenter and Churchman, who does not shake himself from it by open disavowal? I am not meddling with anybody else's church; but the church that claims me as a parishioner would compel me, if it could, to pay its church rates, and that does take from me my share of tithe every year. I ask the sturdy Protestants of England, and especially the laity of the Church of England, whether they intend forever to foster such abominations? Arise, Britannia! nation of the free, and shake thy garments from the dust of this hoary superstition; and as for thee, O Church of England! may God bless thee with ministers who will sooner come forth to poverty and shame than pervert or assist in perverting the Word of God.

6. I have not quite done: I have another question to ask. Look at the thanksgiving which is offered on the twentieth day of June, on account of Her Majesty's accession: in this thanksgiving we very heartily join, although we decline to pray by book on the twentieth of June or any other

day; look at the close that thanksgiving, and you see the name of Lord John Russell as a sort of official authority for the prayer! Is Earl Russell also among the prophets? And on the other side of the page, in order that the Tories may edify the church as well as the Whigs, I see the hand of S. H. Walpole. Is he also a governor in Christ's church? Hath the Lord given these men power to legislate for his church, or sign mandates for her to obey? But what is it all about? "*Victoria Regina, our will and pleasure is that these four forms of prayer,*" etc. Do you see? here is royal supremacy! Further on, in the next page: "*Now, therefore, our will and pleasure is,*" etc. See the Preface to the Articles, "*Being by God's Ordinance, according to our just Title, Defender of the Faith, and Supreme Governor of the Church, within these our Dominions;*" and again, "*We are Supreme Governor of the Church of England.*" This is the way in which your Church bows herself before the kingdoms of this world. I demand, earnestly demand, a "Thus saith the Lord" for this royal supremacy. If any king, or queen, or emperor shall say, in any Christian church, "Our will and pleasure is," we reply, "We have another King,—one Jesus." As to the Queen, honored and beloved as she is, she is by her sex incapacitated for ruling in the church. Paul decides that point by his plain precept, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence;" and if a king were in the case, we should say, "We render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's." In civil matters, we cheerfully obey princes and magistrates; but if any king, queen, emperor, or what not, usurps power in the church of God, we reply, "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren. The crown-rights belong to King Jesus: he alone is King in Zion." But I am met at once with the reply, "Well, but Christ is the Head of the Established Church, as well as the Queen." I remember reading about a three-headed dog which kept the gates of hell, but I never dreamed of a two-headed church till I heard of the Anglican Establishment. A two-headed church is a monster! The Queen the Head of the Church, and King Jesus the Head of the Church, too! Never. Where is a "Thus saith the Lord" for this? No man living who calls himself an Englishman has a word to say of Her Majesty except that which is full of honor and esteem and loyal affection; but the moment we come to talk about the church of Christ, whoever shall say, or think, or believe, that there is any headship to the church of Christ except the person of Christ himself, he knoweth not what he saith nor whereof he affirmeth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head *over all things* to his church, which is his body: the fulness of him filleth all in all. Here stand the two letters "V. R." at the top of certain mandates, and they mean just this: "Our royal authority commands that you shall not believe this, and you shall believe that; you shall not pray this, and you shall pray that; and you shall pray on such a day," and so on. The church which thus bows to authority commits fornication with the kings of the earth, and virtually renounces her allegiance to Christ to gain the filthy lucre of state endowments. He is the freeman whom the truth makes free, and who wears no gilded collar, with a chain hanging therefrom held in a royal hand. Remember how the Chancellor laughed to scorn the whole bench of bishops, and rightly so; for he who voluntarily makes himself a bondman deserves to feel the lash. May the little finger of our state grow heavier than the loins of James or Elizabeth, until all good men flee from the house of bondage. Servants of God, will ye be servants of man? Ye who profess to follow King Jesus and see him crowned with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, do you take off his diadem to put it upon the head of another? No, it shall never be. Scotland has repelled the royal intrusion right bravely by her sons of the Free Church, who have left all to follow King Jesus. Her bush burned in the olden times, but was not consumed; the covenant was stained with blood, but it was never slain. Let us revive that covenant, and, if need be, seal it with our

blood. Let the Church of England have what king she pleases, or what prince she pleases for her head; but this I know, that there is no “Thus saith the Lord” concerning the ecclesiastical supremacy of Victoria Regina, nor the authority of Lord John Russell, or S. H. Walpole, or any of that company, honorable though they be.

7. Now once more: one other question. I am profoundly ignorant, and have not the power to judge of these things (so am I informed), and therefore I would like to ask for a “Thus saith the Lord” for a few of the canons;—no, perhaps I had better not read them; they are too bad,—they are full of all malice and uncharitableness, and everything that cometh of the foul fiend. I will ask whether there can be found any “Thus saith the Lord” for this: Canon 10. *“Maintainers of Schismatics in the Church of England to be censured.* Whoever shall hereafter affirm that such ministers as refuse to subscribe to the form and manner of God’s worship in the Church of England, prescribed in the Communion-Book, and their adherents, may truly take unto them the name of another church not established by law, and dare presume to publish it, that this their pretended church hath of long time groaned under the burden of certain grievances imposed upon it, and upon the members thereof before mentioned, by the Church of England, and the orders and constitutions therein by law established, let them be excommunicated, and not restored until they repent and publicly revoke such their wicked errors.” What Scripture warrants one church to excommunicate another merely for being a church, and complaining of undoubted grievances?

Canon 11. *“Maintainers of Conventicles censured.* Whosoever shall hereafter affirm or maintain that there are within this realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations of the king’s born subjects, than such as by the laws of this land are held and allowed, which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful churches, let him be excommunicated, and not restored but by the Archbishop, after his repentance and public revocation of such his wicked errors.” Where doth Holy Scripture authorize the excommunication of every good man who is charitable enough to believe that there are other churches beside his own? Search ye out of to book of the Lord, and read!

For very much in this Book of Canons I beg to be informed of a “Thus saith the Lord.” For matters which do not concern religion and have only to do with the mere arrangement of service, we neither ask nor expect a divine precept; but upon vital points of doctrine, ceremony, or precept, we cannot do without it. Scarcely can any document be more inconsistent with Scripture than the Book of Canons, and hence it is ever kept in the back ground, because those who know anything about it must be ashamed of it. And yet these are Canons of the Church of England,—canons which are inconsistent, many of them, with even the common rules of our own present enlightened law, let alone the Word of God. We ask a “Thus saith the Lord” for them, and we wait until a “Thus saith the Lord” shall be found to defend them.

Now some will say, why do I thus take this matter up and look into it? I have already told you the reason, dear friends. There is an opportunity for pushing another Reformation given to us just now, of which if we do not avail ourselves we shall be very guilty. Some have said, “Why not go on preaching the gospel to sinners?” I do preach the gospel to sinners, as earnestly as ever I did in my life; and there are as many conversions to God as at any former period. This is God’s work: and beware lest any of you lift a finger against it. The hand of the Lord is in this thing, and he that lives shall see it. Let us have our prayers, that good may come of this controversy, even though you may deplore it. As for anything else that you can do, it shall not turn us a hair’s-breadth from this testimony to which we feel God has called us, though it bringeth upon us every evil that flesh

would shrink from. The words of Dr. Guthrie are well worth quoting here: "The servant is no better than his master; and I do believe, were we more true to God, more faithful and honest in opposing the world for its good, we should get less smoothly along the path of life, and have less reason to read with apprehension these words of Jesus: 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.' Not less true than shrewd was the remark of a Scotch woman respecting one who, just settled in the ministry, had been borne to his pulpit amid the plaudits of all the people: 'If he is a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will have all the blackguards in the parish on his head before a month is gone.'"

III. Now, to close, let me say to you, my hearers, have any of you a hope of heaven which will not stand the test of "Thus saith the Lord?" What are you resting upon? Are you resting upon something which you felt when excited at a prayer-meeting or under a sermon? Remember you will not have that excitement to bear you up in death, and the religion of excitement will not suffice in the day of judgment. Are you building upon your own works? Are you depending upon your own feelings? Do you rely upon sacraments? Are you placing your trust upon the word of man? If so, remember that when God shakes all things he will shake these false foundations; but oh! build upon the Word of my Lord and Master; trust your soul with Jesus. Hating sin, and clinging to the great sinbearer, you shall find in him a rock of refuge which can never, never fail you; but I do conjure you, as the Lord liveth, search and try yourselves by the Word of God. No doubt there are many among us who are not built upon the Rock of Ages, and we may any of us be deceived by a mere name to live. Do, then, since the test-day must come,—since you must be weighed in the balances,—weigh yourselves now, my hearers; and let none of us go down to the chambers of destruction believing ourselves to be heirs of heaven, being all the while enemies to the Most High God. May the Lord exalt his own Word, and give us a sure inheritance in the blessings which it brings. Amen.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

The following sermons contain Mr. Spurgeon's views upon the Question now under controversy:—

No. 573.—"Baptismal Regeneration."—170th Thousand.

No. 577.—"Let Us Go Forth."—30th Thousand.

No. 581.—"Children Brought to Christ, Not to the Font."—60th Thousand.

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Preparation for Revival

A Sermon

(No. 597)

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 required 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 of 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.

[Mr. Spurgeon's Sermon on "Baptismal Regeneration" has now reached the 180th thousand; it is felt to be important that it should be still more widely circulated, and friends are urged to make an earnest effort to scatter it far and wide.]

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