



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 5: 1859

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 5: 1859* by Charles Spurgeon

Title: Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 5: 1859
URL: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons05.html>
Author(s): Spurgeon, Charles Haddon (1834-1892)
Publisher: Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library
Date Created: 2002-08-27
CCEL Subjects: All; Sermons;
LC Call no: BV42
LC Subjects: Practical theology
Worship (Public and Private) Including the church year, Christian symbols, liturgy, prayer, hymnology
Times and Seasons. The church year

Table of Contents

<i>About This Book</i>	p. ii
Sermon 220. God's Barriers Against Man's Sin.	p. 1
Sermon 225. Satan's Banquet.	p. 11
Sermon 226. The Feast of the Lord.	p. 21
Sermon 227. Compel Them to Come In.	p. 29
Sermon 228. The Blood.	p. 38
Sermon 229. Love.	p. 47
Sermon 230. The Vanguard and Rereward of the Church.	p. 55
Sermon 231. Faith in Perfection.	p. 64
Sermon 232. Perfection in Faith.	p. 74
Sermon 233. Free Grace.	p. 81
Sermon 234. Corn in Egypt.	p. 91
Sermon 235. The Fainting Warrior.	p. 100
Sermon 236. The Shameful Sufferer.	p. 109
Sermon 237. Hypocrisy.	p. 119
Sermon 238. Reform.	p. 128
Sermon 239. Jacob and Esau.	p. 138
Sermon 240. Prayer Answered, Love Nourished.	p. 148
Sermon 241. Predestination and Calling.	p. 157
Sermon 242. Christ Precious to Believers.	p. 166
Sermon 243. Weak Hands and Feeble Knees.	p. 175
Sermon 244. The Bed and Its Covering.	p. 184
Sermon 245. The Way to God.	p. 193
Sermon 246. Mr. Fearing Comforted.	p. 202
Sermon 247. The Best of Masters.	p. 211
Sermon 248. Little Sins.	p. 220
Sermon 249. A Vision of the Latter-Day Glories.	p. 228
Sermon 250. War! War! War!.	p. 236
Sermon 251. War! War! War!.	p. 246
Sermon 252. Holy Violence.	p. 255
Sermon 253. A Psalm of Remembrance.	p. 264
Sermon 254. The Wounds of Jesus.	p. 273
Sermon 255. Justice Satisfied.	p. 281
Sermon 256. The Believer's Challenge.	p. 290
Sermon 257. The Scales of Judgment.	p. 298

Sermon 258. His Name—the Mighty God.	p. 308
Sermon 259. A Home Mission Sermon.	p. 316
Sermon 260. An Earnest Invitation.	p. 325
Sermon 261. The Call of Abraham.	p. 335
Sermon 262. Distinguishing Grace.	p. 342
Sermon 263. The Story of God's Mighty Acts.	p. 350
Sermon 264. How Saints May Help the Devil.	p. 360
Sermon 265. The Meek and Lowly One.	p. 370
Sermon 266. The Blind Beggar.	p. 380
Sermon 267. The Tabernacle of the Most High.	p. 388
Sermon 268. The Ceremony of Laying the First Stone of the New Tabernacle.	p. 396
Sermon 271. Faith Illustrated.	p. 426
Sermon 272. Limiting God.	p. 435
Sermon 273. Christ Triumphant.	p. 444
Sermon 274. Paul's Desire to Depart.	p. 453
Sermon 275. Who Can Tell?.	p. 463
Sermon 276. A Divided Heart.	p. 473
Sermon 277. The Blood of the Everlasting Covenant.	p. 482
Sermon 278. Grieving the Holy Spirit.	p. 491
Sermon 279. Come and Welcome.	p. 500
Sermon 280. The Chaff Driven Away.	p. 510
Sermon 281. The Saviour's Many Crowns.	p. 520
Sermon 282. Christ's Estimate of His People.	p. 528
Sermon 283. The Sweet Uses of Adversity.	p. 538
Sermon 284. One Antidote for Many Ills.	p. 546
Sermon 285. Man's Ruin and God's Remedy.	p. 556
Indexes.	p. 565
Index of Scripture References.	p. 565
Index of Scripture Commentary.	p. 566

God's Barriers Against Man's Sin

A Sermon

(No. 220)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 16th, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

BELOVED FRIENDS AND KINDRED IN CHRIST,

The days seem like weeks and the weeks seem like months since I went up to the house of the Lord. My heart and my flesh are crying out for the assembly of the saints. Oh how I long to hear once more the solemn shout of the festal throng who with the voice of joy and praise keep holy day!

I am slowly rallying. My great struggle now is with weakness. I feel as if my frail bark had weathered a heavy storm which has made every timber creak. Do not attribute this illness to my having laboured too hard for my Master. For his dear sake, I would that I may yet be able to labour more. Such toils as might be hardly noticed in the ramp for the service of one's country, would excite astonishment in the church for the service of our God.

And now, I entreat you for love's sake to continue in prayer for me. When ye find access to God, remember me. Mind it is not by the words of your mouth, nor yet by the cravings of your heart, but it is by the precious blood of Christ ye must draw nigh to God. And when ye find his sweet presence and are bedewed with his holy anointing, then pour out your souls before him, and make mention of me in your supplications.

Yours to love and serve in the Gospel,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Clapham, Tuesday Evening, 26th October, 1858.

"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone."—Jeremiah 5:22-23.

THE MAJESTY OF God, as displayed in creation and providence, ought to stir up our hearts in adoring wonder and melt them down in willing obedience to his commands. The Almighty power of Jehovah, so clearly manifest in the works of his hands, should constrain us, his creatures, to fear his name and prostrate ourselves in humble reverence before his throne. When we know that the sea, however tempestuous, is entirely submissive to the behests of God; that when he saith, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," it dares not encroach—"the pride of its waves is stayed." When we know that God bridles the tempest, though "nature rocks beneath his tread," and curbs the boisterous storm—he ought to be feared—verily, he is a God before whom it is no dishonour for us to bow ourselves in the very dust. The contemplation of the marvellous works which he doth upon "the great and wide sea," where he tosseth the waves to and fro, and yet keepeth them in their ordained courses, should draw forth our devoutest emotions, and I could almost say, inspire us with homage. Great art thou, O Lord God; greatly art thou to be praised; let the world which thou hast

made, and all that therein is, declare thy glory! I can scarcely conceive a heart so callous that it feels no awe, or a human mind so dull and destitute of understanding, as fairly to view the tokens of God's omnipotent power, and then turn aside without some sense of the fitness of obedience. One might think the impression would be spontaneous in every breast, and if not, only let reason do her office, and by slower process every mind should yet be convinced. Let your eyes behold the stars; God alone can tell their numbers, yet he calls them all by names; by him they are marshalled in their spheres, and travel through the aerial universe just as he gives them charge; they are all his *servants*, who with cheerful haste perform the bidding of their Lord. You see how the stormy wind and tempest like *slaves* obey his will; and you know that the great pulse of ocean throbs and vibrates with its ebb and flow entirely under his control. Have these great things of God, these wondrous works of his, no lesson to teach us? Do they not while declaring his glory reveal our duty? Our poets, both the sacred and the uninspired, have feigned consciousness to those inanimate agents that they might the more truthfully represent their honourable service. But if because we are rational and intelligent beings, we withhold our allegiance from our rightful Sovereign, then our privileges are a curse, and our glory is a shame. Alas, then the instincts of men very often guide them to act by impulse more wisely than they commonly do by a settled conviction. Where is the man that will not bend the knee in time of tempest? Where is the man that does not acknowledge God when he hears the terrible voice of his deep-toned thunder, and sees with alarm the shafts of his lightning fly abroad, cleaving the thick darkness of the atmosphere? In times of plague, famine, and pestilence, men are prone to take refuge in religion—they will make confession, like Pharaoh, when he said, "I have sinned this time: the lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked;" but like him, when "the rain, and the hail, and the thunders have ceased," when the plagues are removed, then they sin yet more, and their hearts are hardened. Hence their sin becomes exceeding sinful, since they sin against truths which even nature itself teaches us are most just. We might learn, even without the written oracles of Scripture, that we ought to obey God, if our foolish hearts were not so darkened; thus unbelief of the Almighty Creator is a crime of the first magnitude. If it were a petty Sovereign against whom ye rebelled, it might be pardonable; if he were a man like yourselves, ye might expect that your faults would easily find forgiveness; but since he is the God who reigns alone where clouds and darkness are round about him, the God to whom all nature is obedient, and whose high behests are obeyed both in heaven and in hell, it becomes a crime, the terrible character of which words cannot pourtray, that you should ever sin against a God so marvellously great. The greatness of God enhances the greatness of our sin. I believe this is one lesson which the prophet intended to teach us by the text. He asks us in the name of God, or rather, God asks us through him—"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"

But while it is *a* lesson, I do not think it is *the* lesson of the text. There is something else which we are to learn from it. God here contrasts the obedience of the strong, the mighty the untamed sea, with the rebellious character of his own people. "The sea," saith he, "obeys me; it never breaks its boundary; it never leapeth from its channel; it obeys me in all its movements. But man, poor puny man, the little creature whom I could crush as the moth, will not be obedient to me. The sea obeys me from shore to shore, without reluctance, and its ebbing floods, as they retire from its bed, each of them says to me, in the voices of the pebbles, 'O Lord, we are obedient to thee, for thou art our master.' But my people," says God, "are a revolting and a rebellious people; they go astray from me." And is it not, my brethren, a marvellous thing, that the whole earth is obedient to God, save man? Even the mighty Leviathan, who maketh the deep to be hoary, sinneth not against God, but

his course is ordered according to his Almighty Master's decree. Stars, those wondrous masses of light, are easily directed by the very wish of God; clouds, though they seem erratic in their movement, have God for their pilot; "he maketh the clouds his chariot;" and the winds, though they seem restive beyond control, yet do they blow, or cease to blow just as God willeth. In heaven, on earth, even in the lower regions, I had almost said, we could scarcely find such a disobedience as that which is practised by man; at least, in heaven, there is a cheerful obedience; and in hell there is constrained submission to God, while on earth man makes the base exception, he is continually revolting and rebelling against his Maker.

Still there is another thought in the text, and this I shall endeavour to dilate upon. Let us read it again. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"—now here is the pith of the matter—"which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they soar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone." "The sea," says God, "is not only obedient, but it is rendered obedient by the restraint merely of sand." It is not the rock of adamant that restrains the sea one half so easily as just that little belt of sand and shingle which preserves the dry land from the inundations of the ocean. "The sea obeys me, and has for its only check the sand; and yet," says he, "my people, though they have restraints the strongest that reason could imagine, are a revolting and a rebellious people, and scarcely can my commands, my promises, my love, my judgment, my providence or my word restrain them from sin."

That is the point we shall dwell upon this morning. *The sea is easily restrained by a belt of sand; but we, notwithstanding all the restraints of God, are a people bent on revolting from him.*

The doctrine of the text, seems to me to be this—that without supernatural means God can make all creatures obedient save man; but man is so disobedient in his heart, that only some supernatural agency can make him obedient to God, while the simple agency of sand can restrain the sea, without any stupendous effort of divine power more than he ordinarily puts out in nature: he can not thus make man obedient to his will.

Now, my brethren, let us look back into history, and see if it has not been so. What has been a greater problem, if we may so speak concerning the Divine mind, than that of restraining men from sin? How many restraints God has put upon man! Adam is in the garden, pure and holy; he has restraints that one would think strong enough to prevent his committing a sin so contemptible and apparently unprofitable as that by which he fell. He is to have the whole garden in perpetuity, if he will not eat of that tree of life; his God will walk with him, and make him his friend; moreover, in the cool of the day, he shall hold converse with angels, and with the Lord, the Master of angels; and yet he dares eat of that holy fruit which God had set forth not to be touched by man. Then he must die. One would think it was enough, to promise reward for obedience, and punishment for sin; but no, the check fails. Man, left to his own free will, touches the fruit, and he falls. Man cannot be restrained, even in his purity, so easily as the mighty sea. Since that time, mark what God has done by way of restraint. The world has become corrupt it is altogether covered with iniquity. Forth comes a prophet. Enoch prophesies of the coming of the Lord, declaring that he sees him coming with ten thousand of his saints to judge the world. That world goes on, as profane and unheeding as before. Another prophet is raised up, and cries, "Yet a little while, and this earth shall be drowned in a flood of water." Do men cease from sin? No; profligacy, crime, iniquities of the vilest class, are as prevalent as before. Man rushes on to his destruction; the deluge comes and destroys all but

a favoured few. The new family goes out to people the earth: will not the world now be clean and holy? Wait a little, and ye shall see. One of these men will do a deed which shall render him a curse for ever, and his son Canaan shall in after years inherit his father's curse. Not long after that you see Sodom and Gomorrah devoured with fire which God rains out of heaven. But what of this? What though in later years Pharaoh and his chariots are drowned in the Red sea? What though Sennacherib and his hosts perish at midnight by the blast of an archangel? What though the world reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, being drunken with the wine of God's wrath? What though the earth be scarred and burned by war? What though it be deluged with floods? What though it be oppressed with famines, pestilences, and diseases? She still goes on in the same manner; at this hour the world is a sinful, rebellious world, and until God shall work a work in our day, such as we shall scarce believe, though a man tell it to us, the world shall never be pure and holy. The sea is restrained by sand; we admire the beautiful poetic fact; but man, being naturally more ungovernable than the storm and more impetuous than the ocean, is not to be tamed; he will not bend his neck to the Lord, nor will he be obedient to the God of the whole earth.

"But what of this fact?"—you say—"we know it is true; we do not doubt it." Stay awhile; I am now coming to deal with your hearts and consciences; and may the Holy Spirit help me in doing so! I shall divide, as God would divide them,—*saints* and *sinners*.

First of all, ye *saints*, I have a word to say to you. I want you to look at this as a doctrine not more evident in the history of mankind at large, than abundantly verified in your own case. Come, now, I want to ask of you this morning, whether it cannot be said of you truly—"The sea is bound by sand; but I am one of those people who are bent on revolting from God, neither can any of his restraints keep me from sin." Let us review, for a few moments, the various restraints which God has put upon his people to keep them from sins which, nevertheless, are altogether ineffectual, without the accompanying power of irresistible grace.

First, then, remember there is a restraint of gratitude which, to the lowly regenerated heart, must necessarily form a very strong motive to obedience. I can conceive of nothing that ought so much to prompt me to obedience as the thought that I owe so much to God. O heir of heaven! thou canst look back to eternity and see thy name in life's fair book set down; thou canst sing of electing love; thou dost believe that a covenant was made with Christ in thy behalf, and that thy salvation was made secure in that moment when the hands of the Eternal Son grasped the stylus and signed his name as the representative of all the elect. Thou believest that on Calvary thy sins were all atoned for; thou hast in thy soul the conviction that thy sins, past, present, and to come, were all numbered on the scape-goat's head of old, and carried away for ever; thou believest that neither death nor hell can ever divide thee from thy Saviour's breast; thou knowest that there is laid up for thee a crown of life which fadeth not away, and thine expectant soul anticipates that with branches of palms in thine hands, with crowns of gold on thine head, and streets of gold beneath thy feet, thou shalt be happy for ever. Thou believest thyself to be one of the favoured of heaven, a special object of divine solicitation; thou thinkest that all things work together for thy good, yea, thou art persuaded that everything in providence has a special regard to thee, and to thy favoured brethren. I ask thee, O saint, is not this a bond strong enough to keep thee from sin? If it were not for the desperate unstableness of thy heart, wouldst thou not be restrained from sin by this? Is not thy sin exceeding sinful, because it is sin against electing love, against redeeming peace, against all-surpassing mercy, against matchless affection, against shoreless grace, against spotless love? Ah! sin has reached its climax, when it dares to sin against such love as this. O Christian! thine affection to thy Lord and

Master should restrain thee from iniquity. And is it not a fearful proof of the terrible character of thine heart, of thine heart even now, for still thou hast evil remaining in it, that all the ties of gratitude are still incapable of keeping thee from unholiness. The sins of yesterday rise to thy memory now. Oh! look back on them. Do they not tell thee that thou dost sin most ungratefully? O saint! didst thou not yesterday use thy Master's name in vain, and not thy Master's only, but thy Father's name? Hadst thou not yesterday an unbelieving heart? Wast thou not petulant when girded with favours that ought to make a living man unwilling to complain? Wast thou not, when God hath forgiven thee ten thousand talents, angry with thy neighbour, who owed thee a hundred pence? Ah Christian! thou art not yet free from sin, nor wilt thou be, until thou hast washed thy garments in death's black stream, and then thou shalt be holy, as holy as the glorified and pure and spotless, even as the angels around the throne, but not till then. I ask thee, O saint, viewing thy sins as sins against love and mercy, against covenant promises, covenant oaths, covenant engagements, ay, and covenant fulfilments, is not thy sin a desperate thing, and art not thou thyself a rebellious and revolting being, seeing that thou canst not be restrained by such a barrier of adamant as thy soul acknowledges?

Next notice, that the saint has not only this barrier against sin, but many others. He has the whole of God's Word given him by way of warning; its pages he is accustomed to read; he reads there, that if he break the statutes and keep not the commandments of the Lord, his Father will visit his transgressions with a rod, and his iniquity with stripes. He has before him in God's Word abundant examples. He finds a David going with broken bones to his grave after his sin; he finds a Samson shorn of his locks, and with his eyes put out; he sees proof upon proof that sin will find a man out; that the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Abundant warnings there are for the child of God, not of saints who have perished, for we have none such on record in Scripture, and none ever shall finally perish—but we have many warnings of great and grievous damages sustained by God's own children when they have sailed out of their proper course. And yet, O Christian, against all warning and against all precept thou darest to sin. Oh! art thou not a rebellious creature, and mayest thou not this morning humble thyself at the thought of the greatness of thine iniquity?

Again: the saint sins against his own experience, When he looks back upon his past life he finds that sin has always been a loss to him; he has never found any profit, but has always lost by it. He remembers such and such a transgression; it appeared sweet to him at the time, but oh! it made his Master withdraw his presence and hide his face. The saint can look back on the time when sin hung like a mill-stone round his neck, and he felt the terrible flame of remorse burning in his soul, and knew how evil a thing and bitter it is to sin against God. And yet the saint sins. Now, if the unconverted man sins, he does not sin against his own experience, for he has not had that true heartfelt experience that renders sin exceeding sinful. But every time thou sinnest, O grey-headed saint, thou sinnest with a vengeance, for thou hast had all through thy life so much proof of what sin has been to thee. Thou hast not been deceived about it, for thou hast felt its bitterness in thy bowels: and when thou sippest the accursed draught thou art infatuated indeed, because thou sinnest against experience. Ay, and the youngest of the saints, have you not been made to taste the bitterness of sin? I know you have, if you are saints! and will you go and dip your fingers in the nauseous cup? Will you put the poisoned goblet to your lips again? Yes, you will; but because you do so in the teeth of your experience, it ought to make you weep, that you should be such desperate rebels against such a loving God, who has put not merely a barrier of sand, but a barrier of tried steel to keep in your lusts, and yet they will break forth; verily ye are a rebellious and revolting people.

Then again, God guards all his children with providence, in order to keep them from sin. I could tell you, even from the little experience I have had of spiritual things, many cases in which I feel I have been kept from sin by Divine providence. There have been seasons when the strong hand of sin has appeared for a while to get the mastery over us, and we have been dragged along by some strong inherent lust, which we were prone to practise before our regeneracy. We were intoxicated with the lust, we remember how pleasurable it was to us in the days of our iniquity, how we revelled in it, till we were on a sudden dragged to the very edge of the precipice, and we looked down; our brain reeled, we could not stand; and do we not remember how just then some striking providence came in our way, and saved us, or else we should have been excommunicated from the church for violating the rules of propriety. Ah! strange things happen to some of us; strange things have happened to some of you. It was only a providence which on some sad and solemn occasion, to which you never look back without regret, saved you from sin which would have been a scab on your character. Bless God for that! But remember, notwithstanding the girdlings of his providence, how many times you have offended; and let the frequency of your sin remind you that you must indeed be a rebellious creature. Though he has afflicted you, you have sinned; though he has given you chastisement, you have sinned; though he has put you in the furnace, yet the dross has not departed from you. Oh! how corrupt your hearts are, and how prone you are still to wander, notwithstanding all the barriers God has given you to encompass you!

Yet, once more let me remind you, beloved, that the ordinances of God's house are all intended to be checks to sin. He girds us by the worship of the sanctuary; he girds us by the remembrance of our holy baptism; and all else that is connected with Christianity is intended to check us from sin. And great are the effects which these produce; yet all are insufficient, without the preserving grace of God, given to us day by day. Let us think, beloved, too, that God has given to us a tender conscience, more tender than the conscience of worldly men, because he has given us living consciences, whereas theirs are often seared and dead. And yet, against this living conscience, against the warnings of the Spirit, against precept, against promise, against experience, against the honour of God, and against the gratitude they owe him, the saints of God have dared to sin, and they must confess before him that they are rebellious, and have revolted from him. Bow down your heads with shame while ye consider your ways, and then lift up your hearts, Christians, in adoring love, that he has kept you when your feet were making haste to hell, where you would have gone, but for his preserving grace. Shall not this long suffering of your God, this tender compassion, be your theme every day—

“While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures?”

Will you not pray, that God should not cast you away, nor take his Holy Spirit from you, though you are a rebellious creature, and though you have revolted against him?

This is for the saints; and now may the Spirit help me, while I strive to apply it to *sinner!* Sinner, I have solemn things to say to thee this morning; lend me for a few minutes thy very closest attention; I will speak to thee as though this were the last message I should ever deliver in thine ear. I have asked my God, that I may so speak to thee, O sinner, that if I win not thy heart I may at least be free from thy blood; and that if I am not able to convince thee of thy sin, I may at any rate make thee without excuse in that day “when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” Come, then, sinner; in the first place, I bid thee consider thy guilt. Thou hast heard what I have said. The mighty ocean is kept in obedience by God, and restrained within

its channel by simple sand; and thou, a pitiful worm, the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, thou art a rebel against God. The sea obeys him; thou dost not. Consider, I beseech thee, how many restraints God has put on thee: he has not checked thy lusts with sand but with beetling cliffs; and yet thou hast burst through every bound in the violence of thy transgressions. Perhaps he has checked thy soul by the remembrance of thy guilt. Thou hast this morning felt thyself a despiser of God; or if not a despiser, thou art a mere hearer, and hast no part nor lot in this matter. Dost thou not remember thy sins in the face of thy mother's counsels and thy father's strong admonitions? Do they never check thee? Dost thou never think thou seest a mother's tears coming after thee? Hast thou never heard a father's prayer for thee? When thou hast been spending thy nights in dissipation, and hast gone home late to thy bed, hast thou never thought thou hast seen thy father's spirit at thy bed side, offering one more prayer for an Absalom, his son, or for an Ishmael, his rebellious child? Consider what thou hast learned, child! Baptized with a mother's tears, almost immersed in them; thou wast early taught to know something of God; when thou didst go from thy mother's knees, thou wentest to those of a pious teacher; thou wast trained in a Sabbath school, or at any rate thou wast taught to read the Bible. Thou knowest the threatenings of God; it is no new tale to thee, when I warn thee that sinners must be condemned; it is no new story when I tell thee that saints shall wear the starry crown; thou knowest all that. Consider, then, how great is thy guilt; thou hast sinned against light and knowledge; thou art not the Hottentot sinner, who sins in darkness, but thou art a sinner before high heaven, in the full light of day; thou hast not sinned ignorantly, thou hast done it when thou knewest better; and when thou comest to be lost, thou shalt have an additional doom, because thou didst know thy duty, but thou didst it not. I charge that home upon thee, I charge it solemnly upon thy conscience; is it true, or is it not? Some of you have had other things. Don't you remember, some little time ago, when sickness was rife, you were stretched on your bed? One night you will never forget; sickness had got strong hold of you, and the strong man bowed himself. Do you not remember what a sight you had then of the regions of the damned; not with your eyes, but with your conscience? You thought you heard their shrieks; you thought you would be amongst them yourself soon. Methinks I see you; you turned your face to the wall, and you cried, "O God, if thou wilt save my life, I will give myself to thee!" Perhaps it was an accident; thou didst fear that death was very near; the terrors of death laid hold of thee, and thou didst cry, "Oh! God, let me but reach home in safety, and my bended knees and my tears pouring in torrents, shall prove that I am sincere in the vow I make." But didst thou perform that vow? Nay, thou hast sinned against God; thy broken vows have gone before thee to judgment. Dost thou think it a little thing to make a promise to thy fellow creature and break it? It may be so in thine estimation, but not so in that of honest men. But dost thou think it a little thing to promise to thy Maker, and to break thy promise? There is no light penalty for sinning against the Almighty God; it will cost thee thy soul, man, and thy soul's blood for ever, if thou goest on in this fashion. Vow and pay, or if thou payest not, vow not; for God shall visit those vows upon thee, in the day when he maketh inquisition for blood, and destroyeth thy soul. Thou hast been guarded thus; remember that thou hast had extraordinary deliverances, the disease did not kill thee; thy broken bones were healed; thou didst not die; when the jaws of death were uplifted, they did not close upon thee: here thou art still. Thy life is spared.

Oh! my dear hearers, some of you are the worst; you have regularly sat in these pews—God is my witness, how earnestly I have longed for you all in the bowels of Christ. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to you. If I had been a time-server, and kept back part of the truth, much more honour would I have received from men than I have received; but I have cleared

my conscience, I trust, from your blood. How many times have I seen men and women cry, the hot tears falling down their cheeks in quick succession? and expected that I should have seen a change in some of your lives. But how many of you there are, who have gone on sinning against warnings, which, I am sure, though they may have been excelled in eloquence, have never been exceeded in heartiness! Do you think it a little thing to sin against God's ambassador? It is no little sin: every time we sin against the warnings we have received, we sin so much the more heinously. But there are some—I had hope for you, but ye have gone back to the ways of perdition; I have cried, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" But I have been obliged to go to my Master with that exclamation, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Woe unto thee, Bethsaida; it were better for thee that thou hadst been Tyre and Sidon than that thou shouldst have been left in the midst of privileges, if thou shouldst perish at last! Woe unto you, hearers of New Park Street! Woe unto you that listen not to the voice of the minister here! If ye perish beneath our warnings, ye shall perish in a horrible manner! Woe unto thee, Capernaum! thou art exalted unto heaven, but thou shalt be cast down to hell." Woe unto thee, young woman! thou hast had a pious mother, and thou hast had many warnings. Woe unto thee, young man! thou hast been a profligate youth; thou hast been brought to this house of prayer from thine infancy, and thou art sitting there even now; often does thy conscience prick thee; often thy heart hast told thee that thou art wrong; and yet thou art still unchanged! Woe unto thee! Woe unto thee! And yet will I cry unto my God, that he would avert that woe and pardon thee; that he would not let thee die, but bring thee unto himself, lest now ye perish in your sins. Ye sinners! God has a controversy with you; he tames the sea, but ye will not be tamed; nothing but his marvellous grace exerted in you will ever check you in your lusts. You have sinned against warnings and reproofs, against providences, mercies, and judgments, and still ye sin.

Oh! my hearers, when you sin, you do not sin so cheaply as others; for when you sin, you sin in the very teeth of hell. There is not a man or woman in this place, I am sure, who, when he or she sins, does not know that hell is the inevitable consequence! Sirs, ye do not sin in the dark. When God shall give you the wages of your iniquity, you shall not be able to say, "O God, I did not know this would be the pay for my labour." When thou didst sow tares, thou couldst not expect that thou shouldst reap wheat; thou knowest "that they who sow carnal things, shall reap carnal things;" thou art sowing to the flesh, but not with the hope that thou wilt reap salvation; for thou knowest that "he who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Sinner, it is a dreadful thing to sin, when God puts hell before thee! What! sin when he has given out his threatening? Sin! while Sinai is thundering, while hell is blazing? Ay, that is to sin indeed. But how many of you, my dear hearers, have sinned like this. I would to God, that he would turn this house into a Bochim, that you might weep over your guilt. It is the hardest thing in the world to make men believe their guilt. If we could once get them to do that, we should find that Christ would reveal to them his salvation. I cannot with my poor voice and my weak utterance, even bring you to think that it is Christ Jesus in the ministry of his Spirit who can give you a true and real sense of your sin. Hath he done so? Hath he blessed my words to any of you? Do any of you feel your sins? Do any of you know that you are rebellious? Do you say, from this time forth you will mend your ways? Sirs, let me tell you, you cannot do that. Are you better than the mightiest of men? The best of men are but men at the best, and they are convinced that they cannot tame their own turbulent passions. God saith that the sea can be tamed with sand; but the heart of man cannot be restrained, it is still revolting. Dost thou think thou canst do that, which God saith is impossible? Dost thou suppose thyself stronger

than God Almighty? What! canst thou change thine own heart, when God declares that we must be born again from above, or else we cannot see the kingdom of heaven? Others have tried to do it, but they cannot. I beseech thee, do not try to do it with thine own strength. I am glad thou knowest thy guilt; but O do not increase that guilt, by seeking to wash it out in the foul stream of thine own resolutions. Go and tell God that thou knowest thy sin, and confess it before him, and ask him to create in thee a clean heart, and renew in thee a right spirit. Tell him thou knowest that thou art rebellious, and thou art sure that thou always wilt be, unless he change thy heart; and I beseech thee, rest not satisfied until thou hast a new heart. My hearer, be not content with Baptism; be not content with the Lord's Supper; be not content with shutting up your shop on Sunday; be not content with leaving off drunkenness; be not content with giving up swearing. Remember, you may do all that, and be damned. It is a new heart and a right spirit you want; begin with that, and when you have that, all the rest will come right. Bethink thee, my hearer; thou mayest varnish and gild thyself, but thou canst never change thyself. Thou mayest moralise, but thou canst never spiritualise thy heart. But just bethink thee. Thou art this morning lost; and just think of this,—thou canst do nothing whatever to save thyself. Let that thought rise in thy soul, and lay thee very low; and when thou goest to God, cry, "O Lord, do what I cannot do; save me, O my God, for thy mercy's sake."

My dear hearers, have I spoken harshly to you, or wilt ye rather take it in love? Ye who have sinned thus terribly against God, do ye feel it? Well, I have no grace *to offer* to thee, I have no Christ *to offer* to thee, but I have Christ *to preach* to thee. Oh! what shall I say? This:—you are a sinner. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." Art thou a sinner? Then he came to save thee. Oh! joyful sound. I am ready to leap in the pulpit for very joy, to have this to preach to thee. I can clap my hands with ecstasy of heart, that I am allowed again to tell thee—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Let me tell you that when he came into this world he was nailed to the cross, and that there he expired in desperate griefs and agony; and there he shrieked, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There the blood ran from his hands and feet, and because he suffered he is able to forgive. Sinner, dost thou believe that? Thou art black; dost thou believe, in the face of thy blackness, that Christ's blood can make thee white? What sayest thou, sinner? God has convinced thee of thy sin; art thou willing to be saved in God's way this morning? If thou art willing, thou shalt be saved. It is written,—"*Whosoever will, let him come.*" Art thou thirsty this morning? come hither and drink. Art thou hungry? come and eat. Art thou dying? come and live. My Master bids me tell you, all you who feel your sins, that you are forgiven; all you who know your transgressions, he bids me tell you this:—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions, for my name's sake." Hast thou been an adulterer, hast thou been a whore-monger, a thief, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, a swearer? I find no exception in this proclamation;—"Whosoever will, let him come." I find no exception in this;—"Him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." Dost thou know thy guilt? then I do not ask thee what thy guilt is. Though thou wert the vilest creature, again, I tell thee, if thou knowest thy guilt, Christ will forgive thee. Believe it, and thou art saved.

And now will ye go away and forget all this? Some of you have wept this morning. No wonder; the wonder is that we do not all weep, until we find ourselves saved! You will go away to-morrow to your farms and to your merchandize, to your shops, and to your offices; and the impression that may have been produced on you this Sabbath morning will pass away like the morning cloud. My hearers, I would not weep, though you should call me all the names you can think of, but I wilt

weep because you will not weep for yourselves. Sinners, why will ye be damned? Is it a pleasant thing to revolt in the flames of hell? Sirs, what profit is there in your death! What! is it an honorable thing to rebel against God? Is it an honor to stand and be the scorn of God's universe? Dost thou say thou shalt not die; yet thou wilt put it off a little while? Sinner, thou wilt never have a more convenient season; if to-day is inconvenient, to-morrow will be more so. Put it off to-day, wipe away the tears from your eyes, and the day may come when you would give a million worlds for a tear, but you shall not be able to get one. Many a man has had a soft heart; it has passed away, and in after years he has said, "Oh, that I could but shed a tear!" O God! make thy word like a hammer this morning, that it may break the rocky heart in pieces! Ye who know your sins, as God's ambassador, I beseech you, "be ye reconciled unto God." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Remember, once lost, ye are lost for ever; but if ye are once saved, ye are certainly saved for ever. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," said Paul of old; Jesus himself hath said "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." I will not finish with a curse. "He that believeth shall be saved." God give you all an interest in that eternal blessing, for the Lord Jesus' sake!

Satan's Banquet

A Sermon

(No. 225)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 28th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”—John 2:9-10.

THE governor of the feast said more than he intended to say, or rather, there is more truth in what he said than he himself imagined. This is the established rule all the world over: “the good wine first, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse.” It is the rule with men; and have not hundreds of disappointed hearts bewailed it? Friendship first—the oily tongue, the words softer than butter, and afterwards the drawn sword. Ahithophel first presents the lordly dish of love and kindness to David, then afterwards that which is worse, for he forsakes his master, and becomes the counsellor of his rebel son. Judas presents first of all the dish of fair speech and of kindness; the Saviour partook thereof, he walked to the house of God in company with him, and took sweet counsel with him; but afterwards there came the dregs of the wine—“He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” Judas the thief betrayed his Master, bringing forth afterwards “that which is worse.” Ye have found it so with many whom ye thought your friends. In the heyday of prosperity, when the sun was shining, and the birds were singing, and all was fair and gay and cheerful with you, they brought forth the good wine; but there came a chilling frost, and nipped your flowers, and the leaves fell from the trees, and your streams were frosted with the ice, and then they brought forth that which is worse,—they forsook you and fled; they left you in your hour of peril, and taught you that great truth, that “Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” And this is the way all the world over—I say it once again—not merely with men, but with nature too.

“Alas, for us, if thou wert all,

And nought beyond O earth;”

for doth not this world serve us just the same? In our youth it brings forth the best wine; then we have the sparkling eye, and the ear attuned to music; then the blood flows swiftly through the veins and the pulse beats joyously; but wait a little and there shall come forth afterwards that which is worse, for the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves; the grinders shall fail because they are few, they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, all the daughters of music shall be brought low; then shall the strong man totter, the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail, the mourners shall go about the streets. First there is the flowing cup of youth, and afterwards the stagnant waters of old age, unless God shall cast into those dregs a fresh flood of his lovingkindness and tender mercy, so that once again, as it always happeneth to the Christian, the cup shall run over, and again sparkle with delight. O Christian, trust not thou in men; rely not thou upon the things of this present time, for this is evermore the rule with men and with the world—“the good wine first, and when ye have well drunken, then that which is worse.”

This morning, however, I am about to introduce you to two houses of feasting. First, I shall bid you look within the doors of the *devil's house*, and you will find he is true to this rule; he brings forth first the good wine, and when men have well drunk, and their brains are muddled therewith, then he bringeth forth that which is worse. Having bidden you look there and tremble, and take heed to the warning, I shall then attempt to enter with you into the *banqueting house of our beloved Lord and Master Jesus Christ*, and of him we shall be able to say, as the governor of the feast said to the bridegroom, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now;" thy feasts grow better, and not worse: thy wines grow richer, thy viands are daintier far, and thy gifts more precious than before. "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

I. First, we are to take a warning glance at the HOUSE OF FEASTING WHICH SATAN HATH BUILDED: for as wisdom hath builded her house, and hewn out her seven pillars, so hath folly its temple and its tavern of feasting, into which it continually tempts the unwary. Look within the banquetting house, and I will shew you four tables and the guests that sit thereat; and as you look at those tables you shall see the courses brought in. You shall see the wine cops brought, and you shall see them vanish one after another, and you shall mark that the rule holds good at all four tables—first the good wine, and afterwards that which is worse—yea, I shall go further—afterwards, that which is *worst of all*.

1. At the first table to which I shall invite your attention, though I beseech you never to sit down and drink thereat, sit the PROFLIGATE. The table of the profligate is a gay table; it is covered over with a gaudy crimson, and all the vessels upon it look exceedingly bright and glistening. Many there be that sit thereat, but they know not that they are the guests of hell, and that the end of all the feast shall be in the depths of perdition. See ye now the great governor of the feast, as he comes in? He has a bland smile upon his face; his garments are not black, but he is girded with a robe of many colours, he hath a honied word on his lip, and a tempting witchery in the sparkle of his eye. He brings in she cup, and says, "Hey, young man, drink hereat, it sparkleth in the cup, it moveth itself aright. Do you see it? It is the wine-cup of *pleasure*." This is the first cup at the banquetting house of Satan. The young man takes it, and sips the liquor. At first it is a cautious sip; it is but a little he will take, and then he will restrain himself. He does not intend to indulge much in lust, he means not to plunge headlong into perdition. There is a flower there on the edge of that cliff: he will reach forward a little and pluck it, but it is not his intention to dash himself from that beetling crag and destroy himself. Not he! He thinks it easy to put away the cup when he has tested its flavour! He has no design to abandon himself to its intoxication. He takes a shallow draught. But O how sweet it is! How it makes his blood tingle within him. What a fool I was, not to have tasted this before! he thinks. Was ever joy like this? Could it be thought that bodies could be capable of such ecstasy as this? He drinks again; this time he takes a deeper draught, and the wine is hot in his veins. Oh! how blest is he! What would he not say now in the praise of Bacchus, or Venus, or whatever shape Beelzebub chooses to assume? He becomes a very orator in praise of sin? It is fair, it is pleasant, the deep damnation of lust appeareth as joyous as the transports of heaven. He drinks, he drinks, he drinks again, till his brain begins to reel with the intoxication of his sinful delight. This is the first course. Drink, O ye drunkards of Ephraim, and bind the crown of pride about your head, and call us fools because we put your cup from us; drink with the harlot and sup with the lustful; ye may think yourselves wise for so doing, but we know that after these things there cometh something worse, for your vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah, your grapes

are grapes of gall, the clusters are bitter; your wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps.

Now with a leer upon his brow, the subtle governor of the feast riseth from his seat. His victim has had enough of the best wine. He takes away that cup, and he brings in another, not quite so sparkling. Look into the liquor; it is not beaded over with the sparkling bubbles of rapture; it is all flat, and dull, and insipid; it is called the cup of *satiety*. The man has had enough of pleasure, and like a dog he vomits, though like a dog he will return to his vomit yet again. Who hath woe? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. I am now speaking figuratively of wine, as well as literally. The wine of lust bringeth the same redness of the eyes; the profligate soon discovers that all the rounds of pleasure end in satiety. "What!" says he, "What more can I do? There! I have committed every wickedness that can be imagined, and I have drained every cup of pleasure. Give me something fresh! I have tried the theatres all round: there! I don't care so much as one single farthing for them all. I have gone to every kind of pleasure that I can conceive. It is all over. Gaiety itself grows flat and dull. What am I to do?" And this is the devil's second course—the course of satiety—a fitful drowsiness, the result of the previous excess. Thousands there are who are drinking of the tasteless cup of satiety every day, and some novel invention whereby they may kill time, some new discovery whereby they may give a fresh vent to their iniquity would be a wonderful thing to them; and if some man should rise up who could find out for them some new fashion of wickedness, some deeper depths in the deeps of the nethermost hell of lasciviousness, they would bless his name, for having given them something fresh to excite them. That is the devil's second course. And do you see them partaking of it? Three are some of you that are having a deep draught of it this morning. You are the jaded horses of the fiend of lust, the disappointed followers of the will-o'-the-wisp of pleasure. God knows, if you were to speak your heart out you would be obliged to say, "There! I have tried pleasure, and I do not find it pleasure; I have gone the round, and I am just like the blind horse at the mill, I have to go round again. I am spell-bound to the sin, but I cannot take delight in it now as I once did, for all the glory on it is as a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer.

Awhile the feaster remains in the putrid sea of his infatuation, but another scene is opening. The governor of the feast commandeth another liquor to be broached. This time the fiend bears a black goblet, and he presents it with eyes full of hell-fire, flashing with fierce damnation. "Drink of that, sir," says he, and the man sips it and starts back and shrieks, "O God! that ever I must come to this!" You must drink, sir! He that quaffs the first cup, must drink the second, and the third. Drink, though it be like fire down your throat! Drink it, though it be as the lava of Etna in your bowels! *Drink! you must drink!* He that sins must suffer; he that is a profligate in his youth must have rottenness in his bones, and disease within his loins. He who rebels against the laws of God, must reap the harvest in his own body here. Oh! there are some dreadful things that I might tell you of this third course. Satan's house has a front chamber full of everything that is enticing to the eye and bewitching to the sensual taste; but there is a back chamber, and no one knoweth, no one hath seen the whole of its horrors. There is a secret chamber, where he shovels out the creatures whom he hath himself destroyed—a chamber, beneath whose floor is the blazing of hell, and above whose boards the heat of that horrible pit is felt. It may be a physician's place rather than mine, to tell of the horrors that some have to suffer as the result of their iniquity. I leave that; but let me tell the profligate spendthrift, that the poverty which he will endure is the result of his sin of extravagant spendthriftcy; let him know, also, that the remorse of conscience that will overtake him is not an

accidental thing that drops by chance from heaven,—it is the result of his own iniquity; for, depend upon it, men and brethren, sin carries an infant misery in its bowels, and sooner or later it must be delivered of its terrible child. If we sow the seed we must reap the harvest. Thus the law of hell's house stands—"first, the good wine, then, afterwards, that which is worse."

The *last course* remains to be presented. And now, ye strong men who mock at the warning, which I would fain deliver to you with a brother's voice and with an affectionate heart, though with rough language. Come ye here, and drink of this last cup. The sinner has at the end brought himself to the *grave*. His hopes and joys were like gold put into a bag full of holes, and they have all vanished—vanished for ever; and now he has come to the last; his sins haunt him, his transgressions perplex him; he is taken like a bull in a net, and how shall he escape. He dies, and descends from disease to damnation. Shall mortal language attempt to tell you the horrors of that last tremendous cup of which the profligate must drink, and drink for ever? Look at it: ye cannot see its depths, but cast an eye upon its seething surface, I hear the noise of rushing to and fro, and a sound as of gnashing of teeth and the wailing of despairing souls. I look into that cup, and I hear a voice coming up from its depths—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" for "Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it." And what say ye to this last course of Satan? "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Profligate! I beseech thee, in the name of God, start from this table! Oh, be not so careless at thy cups; be not so asleep, secure in the peace which thou now enjoyest! Man! death is at the door, and at his heels is swift destruction. As for you, who as yet have been restrained by a careful father and the watchfulness of an anxious mother, I beseech you shun the house of sin and folly. Let the wise man's words be written on thine heart, and be thou mindful of them in the hour of temptation—"Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: for the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell."

2. Do ye see that other table yonder in the middle of the palace? Ah! good easy souls! Many of you had thought that you never went to the feast of hell at all; but there is a table for you too; it is covered over with a fair white cloth, and all the vessels upon the table are most clean and comely. The wine looks not like the wine of Gomorrah, it moveth aright, like the wine from the grapes of Eshcol; it seems to have no intoxication in it; it is like the ancient wine which they pressed from the grape into the cup having in it no deadly poison. Do ye see the men who sit at this table? How self-contented they are! Ask the white fiends who wait at it, and they will tell you, "This is the table of the *self-righteous*: the Pharisee sits there. You may know him; he has his phylactery between his eyes; the hem of his garment is made exceeding broad; he is one of the best of the best professors." "Ah!" saith Satan, as he draws the curtain and shuts off the table where the profligates are carousing, "be quiet; don't make too much noise, lest these sanctimonious hypocrites should guess what company they are in. Those self-righteous people are my guests quite as much as you, and I have them quite as safely." So Satan, like an angel of light, brings forth a gilded goblet, looking like the chalice of the table of communion. And what wine is that? It seems to be the very wine of the sacred Eucharist; it is called the wine of *self-satisfaction*, and around the brim you may see the bubbles of pride. Look at the swelling froth upon the bowl—"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." You know that cup, my self-deceiving hearers; Oh that ye knew the deadly hemlock which is mixed therein. "Sin as

other men do? Not you; not at all. You are not going to submit yourself to the righteousness of Christ: what need you? You are as good as your neighbours; if you are not saved, you ought to be, you think. Don't you pay everybody twenty-shillings in the pound? Did you ever rob anybody in your life? You do your neighbours a good turn; you are as good as other people." Very good! That is the first cup the devil gives, and the good wine makes you swell with self-important dignity, as its fumes enter your heart and puff it up with an accursed pride. Yes! I see you sitting in the room so cleanly swept and so neatly garnished, and I see the crowds of your admirers standing around the table, even many of God's own children, who say, "Oh that I were half as good as he." While the very humility of the righteous provides you with provender for your pride. Wait awhile, thou unctious hypocrite, wait awhile, for there is a second course to come. Satan looks with quite as self-satisfied an air upon his guests this time as he did upon the troop of rioters. "Ah!" says he, "I cheated those gay fellows with the cup of pleasure—I gave them, afterwards, the dull cup of satiety, and I have cheated you, too; you think yourselves all right, but I have deceived you twice, I have befooled you indeed." So he brings in a cup which, sometimes, he himself doth not like to serve. It is called the cup of *discontent and inquietness of mind*, and many there be that have to drink this after all their self-satisfaction. Do you not find, you that are very good in your own esteem, but have no interest in Christ, that when you sit alone and begin to turn over your accounts for eternity, that they do not square somehow—that you cannot strike the balance exactly to your own side after all, as you thought you could? Have not you sometimes found, that when you thought you were standing on a rock, there was a quivering beneath your feet? You heard the Christian sing boldly,—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While, thro' thy blood, absolv'd I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

And you have said, "Well, I cannot sing that, I have been as good a Churchman as ever lived, I never missed going to my church all these years, but I cannot say I have a solid confidence." You had once a hope of self-satisfaction; but now the second course has come in, and you are not quite so contented. "Well," says another, "I have been to my chapel, and I have been baptized, and made a profession of religion, though I was never brought to know the Lord in sincerity and in truth, and I once thought it was all well with me, but I want a something which I cannot find." Now comes a shaking in the heart. It is not quite so delightful as one supposed, to build on one's own righteousness. Ah! that is the second course. Wait awhile, and mayhap in this world, but certainly in the hour of death, the devil will bring in the third cup of *dismay, at the discovery of your lost condition*. How many a man who has been self-righteous all his life, has, at the last discovered that the thing whereon he placed his hope had failed him. I have heard of an army, who, being defeated in battle, endeavoured to make good a retreat. With all their might the soldiers fled to a certain river, where they expected to find a bridge across which they could retreat and be in safety. But when they came to the stream, there was heard a shriek of terror—"The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!" All in vain was that cry; for the multitude hurrying on behind, pressed upon those that were before and forced them into the river, until the stream was glutted with the bodies of drowned men. Such must be the fate of the self-righteous. You thought there was a bridge of ceremonies; that baptism, confirmation, and the Lord's Supper, made up the solid arches of a bridge of good works and duties. But when you come to die, there shall be heard the cry—"The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!" It will be in vain for you to turn round then. Death is close behind you; he forces you

onward, and you discover what it is to perish, through having neglected the great salvation, and attempting to save yourself through your own good works. This is the last course but one: and your last course of all, the worst wine, your everlasting portion must be the same as that of the profligate. Good as you thought yourself to be, inasmuch as you proudly rejected Christ, you must drink the winecup of the wrath of God; that cup which is full of trembling. The wicked of the earth shall wring out the dregs of that cup, and drink them; and you also must drink of it as deep as they. Oh, beware in time! Put away your high looks, and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved.

3. Some of you have as yet escaped the lash, but there is a third table crowded with most honourable guests. I believe there have been more princes and kings, mayors and aldermen, and great merchants sitting at this table, than at any other. It is called the table of *worldliness*. "Humph," says a man, "Well, I dislike the profligate; there's my eldest son, I've been hard at work saving up money all my life, and there's that young fellow, he will not stick to business: he has become a real profligate, I am very glad the minister spoke so sharp about that. As for me—there now; I don't care about your self-righteous people a single farthing; to me it is of no account at all; I don't care at all about religion in the slightest degree; I like to know whether the funds rise or fall, or whether there is an opportunity of making a good bargain; but that's about all I care for." Ah! worldling, I leave read of a friend of yours, who was clothed in scarlet, and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. Do you know what became of him? You should remember it, for the same end awaits yourself. The end of his feast must be the end of yours. If your God is this world, depend upon it you shall find that your way is full of bitterness. Now, see that table of the worldly man, the mere worldling, who lives for gain. Satan brings him in a flowing cup, "There," says he, "Young man, you are starting in business; you need not care about the conventionalities of honesty, or about the ordinary old-fashioned fancies of religion; get rich as quick as ever you can. Get money—get money—honestly if you can, but, if not, get it anyhow," says the devil; and down he puts his tankard. "There," says he, "is a foaming draught for you." "Yes," says the young man, "I have abundance now. My hopes are indeed realised." Here, then, you see the first and best wine of the worldling's feast, and many of you are tempted to envy this man. "Oh, that I had such a prospect in business," says one, "I'm not half so sharp as he is, I could not deal as he deals; my religion would not let me. But how fast he gets rich! O that I could prosper as he does." Come, my brother, judge not before the time, there's a second course to come, the thick and nauseous draught of care. The man has got his money, but they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare. Wealth ill-gotten, or ill-used, or hoarded, brings a canker with it, that does not canker the gold and silver, but cankers the man's heart, and a cankered heart is one of the most awful things a man can have. Ah! see this money-lover, and mark the care which sits upon heart. There is a poor old woman, that lives near his lodge gate. She has but a pittance a week, but she says, "Bless the Lord, I have enough!" She never asks how she is to live, or how she is to die, or how she is to be buried, but sleeps sweetly on the pillow of contentment and faith; and here is this poor fool with untold gold, but he is miserable because he happened to drop a sixpence as he walked along the streets, or because he had an extra call upon his charity, to which the presence of some friend compelled him to yield; or perhaps he groans because his coat wears out too soon.

After this comes *avarice*. Many have had to drink of that cup; may God save any of us from its fiery drops. A great American preacher has said, "Covetousness breeds misery. The sight of houses better than our own, of dress beyond our means, of jewels costlier than we may wear, of

stately equipage, and rare curiosities beyond our reach, these hatch the viper brood of covetous thoughts; vexing the poor, who would be rich; tormenting the rich, who would be richer. The covetous man pines to see pleasure; is sad in the presence of cheerfulness; and the joy of the world is his sorrow, because all the happiness of others is not his. I do not wonder that God *abhors* him. He inspects his heart as he would a cave full of noisome birds, or a nest of rattling reptiles, and loathes the sight of its crawling tenants. To the covetous man life is a nightmare, and God lets him wrestle with it as best he may. Mammon might build its palace on such a heart, and Pleasure bring all its revelry there, Honour all its garlands—it would be like pleasures in a sepulchre, and garlands on a tomb.” When a man becomes avaricious, all he has is nothing to him; “More, more, more!” says he, like some poor creatures in a terrible fever, who cry, “Drink, drink, drink!” and you give them drink, but after they have it, their thirst increases. Like the horse-leech they cry, “Give, give, give!” Avarice is a raving madness which seeks to grasp the world in its arms, and yet despises the plenty it has already. This is a curse of which many have died; and some have died with the bag of gold in their hands, and with misery upon their brow, because they could not take it with them into their coffin, and could not carry it into another world. Well, then, there comes the next course. Baxter, and those terrible old preachers used to picture the miser, and the man who lived only to make gold, in the middle of hell; and they imagined Mammon pouring melted gold down his throat, “There,” say the mocking devils, “that is what you wanted, you have got it now; drink, drink, drink!” and the molten gold is poured down. I shall not, however, indulge in any such terrible imaginations, but this much I know, he that liveth to himself here, must perish; he who sets his affections upon things on earth, hath not digged deep—he has built his house upon the sands; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, down must come his house, and great must be the fall thereof. It is the best wine first, however; it is the respectable man,—respectable and respected,—everybody honours him,—and afterwards that which is worse, when meanness has beggared his wealth, and covetousness has maddened his brain. It is sure to come, as sure as ever you give yourself up to worldliness.

4. The fourth table is set in a very secluded corner, in a very private part of Satan’s palace. There is the table set for *secret sinners*, and here the old rule is observed. At that table, in a room well darkened, I see a young man sitting to-day, and Satan is the servitor, stepping in so noiselessly, that no one would hear him. He brings in the first cup—and O how sweet it is! It is the cup of secret sin. “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” How sweet that morsel, eaten all alone! Was there ever one that rolled so delicately under the tongue? That is the first; after that, he brings in another,—the wine of an unquiet conscience. The man’s eyes are opened. He says, “What have I done? What have I been doing? Ah,” cries this Achan, “the first cup you brought me, I saw sparkling in *that* a wedge of gold, and a goodly Babylonish garment; and I thought, ‘Oh, I must have that;’ but now my thought is, What shall I do to hide this, where shall I put it? I must dig. Ay, I must dig deep as hell before I shall hide it, for sure enough it will be discovered.”

The grim governor of the feast is bringing in a massive bowl, filled with a black mixture. The secret sinner drinks, and is confounded; he fears his sin will find him out. He has no peace, no happiness, he is full of uneasy fear; he is afraid that he shall be detected. He dreams at night that there is some one after him; there is a voice whispering in his ear, and telling him “I know all about it; I will tell it.” He thinks, perhaps, that the sin which he has committed in secret will break out to his friends; the father will know it, the mother will know it. Ay, it may be even the physician will tell the tale, and blab out the wretched secret. For such a man there is no rest. He is always in dread

of arrest. He is like the debtor I have read of; who, owing a great deal of money, was afraid the bailiffs were after him: and happening one day to catch his sleeve on the top of a palisade, said, "There, let me go; I'm in a hurry. I will pay you to-morrow," imagining that some one was laying hold of him. Such is the position in which the man places himself by partaking of the hidden things of dishonesty and sin. Thus he finds no rest for the sole of his foot for fear of discovery. At last the discovery comes; it is the last cup. Often it comes on earth; for be sure your sin will find you out, and it will generally find you out *here*. What frightful exhibitions are to be seen at our police courts of men that are made to drink that last black draught of discovery. The man who presided at religious meetings, the man who was honoured as a saint, is at last unmasked. And what saith the judge—and what saith the world of him? He is a jest, and a reproach, and a rebuke everywhere. But, suppose he should be so crafty, that he passes through life without discovery—though I think it is almost impossible—what a cup he must drink when he stands at last before the bar of God! "Bring him forth, jailor! Dread keeper of the dungeon of hell, lead forth the prisoner." He comes! The whole world is assembled, "Stand up, sir! Did you not make a profession of religion? did not every body think you a saint?" He is speechless. But many there are in that vast crowd who cry, "We thought him so." The book is open, his deeds are read: transgression after transgression all laid bare. Do you hear that hiss? The righteous, moved to indignation, are lifting up their voices against the man who deceived them, and dwelt among them as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Oh, how fearful it must be to bear the scorn of the universe! The good can bear the scorn of the wicked but for the wicked to bear the shame and everlasting contempt which righteous indignation will heap upon them, will be one of the most frightful things, next to the eternal endurance of the wrath of the Most High, which, I need not add, is the last cup of the devil's terrible feast, with which the secret sinner most be filled, for ever and ever.

I pause now, but it is just to gather up my strength to beg that anything I may have said, that shall have the slightest personal bearing upon any of my hearers, may not be forgotten. I beseech you, men and brethren, if now you are eating the fat, and drinking the sweet of hell's banquet, pause and reflect what shall the end be? "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap *corruption*. He that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." I cannot spare more time far that, most assuredly.

II. But you must pardon me while I occupy only a few minutes in taking you into the HOUSE OF THE SAVIOUR, where he feasts his beloved. Come and sit with us at Christ's table of *outward providences*. He does not feast his children after the fashion of the prince of darkness: for the first cup that Christ brings to them is very often a cup of bitterness. There are his own beloved children, his own redeemed; who have but sorry cheer. Jesus brings in the cup of poverty and affliction, and he makes his own children drink of it, till they say, "Thou hast made me drunken with wormwood, and thou hast filled me with bitterness." This is the way Christ begins. The worst wine first. When the serjeant begins with a young recruit, he gives him a shilling, and then, afterwards, come the march and the battle. But Christ never takes his recruits so. They must count the cost, lest they should begin to build, and not be able to finish. He seeks to have no disciples who are dazzled with first appearances. He begins roughly with them, and many have been his children who have found that the first course of the Redeemer's table has been affliction, sorrow, poverty, and want.

In the olden time, when the best of God's people were at the table, he used to serve them worst, for they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy, and they kept on drinking of these bitter cups for many a day;

but let me tell you afterwards he brought out sweeter cups for them, and you that have been troubled have found it so. After the cup of affliction, comes the cup of consolation, and, oh, how sweet is that! It has been the privilege of these lips to drink that cup after sickness and pain; and I can bear witness, that I said of my Master, "Thou hast kept the best wine until now." It was so luscious, that the taste thereof did take away every taste of the bitterness of sorrow; and I said, "Surely the bitterness of this sickness is all past, for the Lord has manifested himself to me, and given me his best wine." But, beloved, the best wine is to come last. God's people will find it so outwardly. The poor saint comes to die. The master has given him the cup of poverty, but now no more he drinks thereof, he is rich to all the intents of bliss. He has had the cup of sickness; he shall drink of that no more. He has had the cup of persecution, but now he is glorified, together with his Master, and made to sit upon his throne. The best things have come last to him in outward circumstances. There were two martyrs once burned at Stratford-le-Bow; one of them was lame, and the other blind, and when they were tied to the stake, the lame man took his crutch and threw it down, and said to the other, "Cheer up, brother, this is the sharp physic that shall heal us, I shall not be lame within an hour of this time nor shalt thou be blind." No, the best things were to come last. But I have often thought that the child of God is very much like the crusaders. The crusaders started of on their journey, and they had to tight their way through many miles of enemies and to march through leagues of danger. You remember, perhaps, in history, the story that when the armies of the Duke of Bouillon came in sight of Jerusalem, they sprang from their horses, clapped their hands, and cried, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem." They forgot all their toils, all the weariness of the journey and all their wounds, for there was Jerusalem in their sight. And how will the saint at last cry, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," when all sorrow, and all poverty, and sickness are past, and he is blest with immortality. The bad wine—bad did I say? nay the *bitter* wine is taken away, and the best wine is brought out, and the saint sees himself glorified for ever with Christ Jesus.

And now, we will sit down at the table of *inward experience*. The first cup that Christ brings to his children, when they sit at that table, is one so bitter that, perhaps, no tongue can ever describe it,—it is the cup of *conviction*. It is a black cup, full of the most intense bitterness. The apostle Paul once drank a little of it, but it was so strong that it made him blind for three days. The conviction of his sin overpowered him totally; he could only give his soul to fasting and to prayer, and it was only when he drank of the next cup that the scales fell from off his eyes. I have drank of it, children of God, and I thought that Jesus was unkind, but, in a little while, he brought me forth a sweeter cup, the cup of his forgiving love, filled with the rich crimson of his precious blood. Oh! the taste of that wine is in my mouth this very hour, for the taste thereof is as the wine of Lebanon, that abideth in the cask for many a day. Do you not remember, when, after you had drunk the cup of sorrow, Jesus came and showed you his hands and his side, and said, "Sinner, I have died for thee, and given myself for thee; believe on me?" Do you not remember how you believed, and sipped the cup, and bow you believed again and took a deeper draught, and said, "Blessed be the name of God from this time forth and for ever; and let the whole earth say, 'Amen,' for he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder, and let the captives go free?" Since then the glorious Master has said to you, "Friend, come up higher!" and he has taken you to upper seats in the best rooms, and he has given you sweeter things. I will not tell you, to-day, of the wines you have drank. The spouse in Solomon's Song may supply the deficiency of my sermon this morning. She drank of the spiced wine of his pomegranate; and so have you, in those high and happy moments when you had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. But tarry awhile, he has

kept the best wine yet. You shall soon come near the banks of the Jordan, and then you shall begin to drink of the old wine of the kingdom, that has been barrelled up since the foundation of the world. The vintage of the Saviour's agony; the vintage of Gethsemane shall soon be broached for you, the old wine of the kingdom. You are come into the land "Beulah," and you begin to taste the full flavour of the wines on the lees well refined. You know how Bunyan describes the state which borders on the vale of death. It was a land flowing with milk and honey; a land where the angels often came to visit the saints, and to bring bundles of myrrh from the land of spices. And now the high step is taken, the Lord puts his finger upon your eyelids and kisses your soul out at your lips. Where are you now? In a sea of love, and life, and bliss, and immortality. "O Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, thou hast indeed kept the best wine until now! My Master! I have seen thee on the Sabbath, but this is an everlasting Sabbath. I have met thee in the congregation, but this is a congregation that shall ne'er break up. O my Master! I have seen the promises, but this is the fulfilment. I have blessed thee for gracious providences, but this is something more than all these: thou didst give me grace, but now thou hast given me glory; thou wast once my shield, but thou art now my sun. I am at thy right hand, where there is fullness of joy for ever. Thou hast kept thy best wine until now. All I ever had before was as nothing compared with this."

And, lastly, for only time fails me, I could preach a week upon this subject. The table of *communion* is one at which God's children must sit. And the first thing they must drink of there, is the cup of communion with Christ in his sufferings. If thou wouldst come to the table of communion with Christ, thou must first of all drink of the wine of Calvary. Christian, thy head must be crowned with thorns. Thy hands must be pierced, I mean not with nails, but, spiritually thou must be crucified with Christ. We must suffer with him, or else we cannot reign with him; we must labour with him first, we must sup of the wine which his Father gave him to drink, or else we cannot expect to come to the better part of the feast. After drinking of the wine of his sufferings, and continuing to drink of it, we must drink of the cup of his labours, we must be baptized with his baptism, we must labour after souls, and sympathise with him in that ambition of his heart—the salvation of sinners, and after that he will give us to drink of the cup of his anticipated honours. Here on earth we shall have good wine in communion with Christ in his resurrection, in his triumphs and his victories, but the best wine is to come at last. O chambers of communion, your gates have been opened to me; but I have only been able to glance within them; but the day is coming when on your diamond hinges ye shall turn, and stand wide open for ever and ever; and I shall enter into the king's palace and go no more out. O Christian! thou shalt soon see the King in his beauty; thy head shall soon be on his bosom; thou shalt soon sit at his feet with Mary; thou shalt soon do as the spouse did, thou shalt kiss him with the kisses of thy lips, and feel that his love is better than wine. I can conceive you, brethren, in the very last moment of your life, or rather, in the first moment of your life, saying, "He has kept the best wine until now." When you begin to see him face to face, when you enter into the closest fellowship, with nothing to disturb or to distract you, then shall you say "The best wine is kept until now."

A saint was once dying, and another who sat by him said—"Farewell, brother, I shall never see you again in the land of the living." "Oh," said the dying man, "I shall see you again in the land of the *living* that is up yonder, where I am going; this is the land of the *dying*." Oh brethren and sisters, if we should never meet again in the land of the dying, have we a hope that we shall meet in the land of the living, and drink the last wine at last.

The Feast of the Lord

A Sermon

(No. 226)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, November 28th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”—John 2:9-10.

I HAD EXHAUSTED my time this morning by describing the feast of Satan—how at the four tables, whereat did sit the profligate, the self-righteous, the worldly, and the secretly sinful, the course of Satan, was always on this wise,—first, the good wine, and when men had well drunken, that which was worse. His feast diminished in its value as it proceeded, and went from the bright crackling of the thorn under the pot to the blackness of darkness for ever. I had then in my second point to show, that the rule of Christ’s banquet is just the very reverse—that Christ doth always give the best wine last—that he doth save the good things until the end of the feast; nay, that sometimes the first cups at the table of Christ are full of wormwood and gall, and are exceeding bitter, but that if we tarry at the feast, they will grow sweeter, and sweeter, and sweeter, until at last, when we shall come into the land Beulah, and especially when we shall enter into the city of our God, we shall be compelled to say, “Thou hast kept the good wine until now.”

Now, my dear friends, this is a great fact, that Christ’s feast increaseth in sweetness. When first the lord Jesus Christ proclaimed a feast for the sons of men, the first cup he set upon the table was but a very little one, and it had in it but few words of consolation. You remember the inscription upon that ancient vessel, the first cup of consolation that was ever held to the sons of men—“The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” There was to them but little sweetness there: much to us, because we can understand it better, and some to them, because God’s Spirit might help them to understand it, but still in the revelation of it there seemed but little promise. As the world went on, there were greater cups of precious wine brought forth, whereof patriarchs and ancient saints did drink; but beloved, all the wine they ever had under the Old Testament dispensation was far behind that of which we drink. He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is more highly favoured than he who is chief under the Old Testament dispensation. Our fathers did eat manna, but we do eat the bread that came down from heaven; they did drink of water in the wilderness, but we drink of that living water whereof if a man drink he shall never thirst. It is true they had much sweetness; the cups of the ancient tabernacle had precious wine in them; there was in the outward symbol the sign and the shadow, much that was delightful to the faith of the true believer; but we must remember that we are drinking to-day of that wine which prophets and kings desired to drink of, but died without a taste thereof. They guessed its sweetness; they could by faith foresee what it would be; but lo! we are allowed to sit at the table and quaff full draughts of wines on the lees well refined, which God hath given to us in this mountain wherein he hath made a feast of fat things for all people.

But, beloved, the text still stands true of us—there is better wine to come. We are in our privileges superior to patriarchs, and kings, and prophets. God has given us a brighter and a clearer day than they had; theirs was but the twilight of the morning, compared with the noon-day which we enjoy. But think not that we are come to the best wine yet. There are more noble banquets for God's church; and who knoweth how long, ere the best of the precious wine shall be broached? Know ye not that the King of Heaven is coming again upon this earth; Jesus Christ, who came once and broached his heart for us on Calvary, is coming again, to flood the earth with glory. He came once with a sin-offering in his hand: behold, he comes no more with a sin-offering, but with the cup of salvation and of thanksgiving, to call upon the name of the Lord and joyously to take unto himself the throne of his father David. You and I, if we be alive and remain, shall yet set that cup to our lips; and if we die, we have this privilege, this happy consolation, that we shall not be behind hand, for "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and we shall drink of that millennial wine which Christ our Saviour hath reserved to the last. Saints! ye cannot tell what golden goblets those are of which ye shall drink in the thousand years of the Redeemer's triumph. Ye cannot tell what wine, sparkling and red, that shall be, which shall come from the vintage of the hills of glory, when he whose garments are red with treading the wine-press, shall descend in the great day and stand upon the earth. Why, the very thought of this cheered Job. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Let this rejoice and cheer thee, Christian, that the good wine is kept even unto that time.

And now, having shown that this is the rule of Christ in the great dispensation which he uses to all his Church, I shall come to the subject of this evening, which is this: First, *The fact that the believer shall find that Christ keeps for him the best wine till the last*; secondly, *The reason of Christ for so doing*; and thirdly, *The lesson which we ought to learn therefrom*.

I. First, THE FACT THAT CHRIST KEEPS HIS GOOD WINE TILL THE LAST. I was thinking as I rode here how very true this is of some of God's people. Why there are some of God's best beloved who have their names upon the breastplate of the great high priest, who are purchased with his blood, and are very dear to his soul, who have not known from their youth up what it is to get out of the depths of poverty. They have to live from hand to mouth, not knowing one day whence another meal shall come. How many more there are of God's people that are lying on beds of affliction. Some of the most precious of God's diamonds are lying on the dunghill of disease. Ye may go and climb to many a chamber where ye shall see the victims of all kinds of diseases, loathsome, protracted, and painful, and ye shall see God's dear ones languishing out a dying life. I might point you to others of God's servants, whose days are spent in toil. There is needed for the human body, and especially for the soul, a little rest and a little of the food of knowledge; but these have had so little instruction that they cannot get mental food ready for themselves; if they read they can scarce understand, and they have hard bondage in this life, which maketh their life bitter and hindereth them from knowledge. They have to work from morning to night, with scarce a moment's rest. Oh, beloved, will it not be true of them, when death shall give them their discharge, when they shall leave this world, which has been to them, with an emphasis, a vale of tears? Will not they have to say: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now?" Oh, what a change for her who has come limping along these many Sabbath days to the sanctuary! for there, she shall go no more up to the Lord's house limping and lame, but the "lame man shall leap like the hart," and like Miriam, she shall dance with the daughters of Israel. Ah, ye may have had to suffer sickness and

sorrow and pain, blindness and deafness, and a thousand of this world's ills: what a change for you, when you find them all gone! No racking pains, no pining want, no anxious care. Ye shall not have to cry for the sunlight to penetrate your abodes, or weep because your sight is failing through incessant labour with that murderous needle; but ye shall see the light of God, brighter than the light of the sun, and ye shall rejoice in the beams that proceed from his countenance. Ye shall have no more infirmities; immortality shall have covered and swallowed them up; that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power; that which was sown disordered, full of pain and sorrow, and disjointed and full of agony, shall be raised full of delectable delights, no more capable of anguish, but quivering with joy and bliss unspeakable. Ye shall no more be poor; ye shall be rich, richer than the miser's dream. Ye shall no more have to labour; there shall ye rest upon your beds, each one of you walking in your uprightness. Ye shall no more suffer from neglect and scorn and ignominy and persecution; ye shall be glorified with Christ, in the day when he shall come to be admired of them that love him. What a change for such! The best wine indeed is kept to the last, in their case, for they have never had any good wine here, to the eyes of men, though secretly they have had many a drink from the bottle of Jesus. He has often put his cordial cup to their lips. They have been like the ewe lamb that belonged to the man in Nathan's parable: they have drunk out of Christ's own cup on the earth, but still even sweeter than that cup shall be the draught which they shall receive at the last.

But, my dear friends, although I put these first, as especially feeling the change, because we can see the difference, yet will it be true of the most favoured of God's children, all of them shall say, "The best wine is kept till now." Of all the men whom I might envy, I think I should first of all envy the apostle Paul. What a man! How highly favoured! how greatly gifted! how much blessed! Ah, Paul, thou couldst talk of revelations and of visions from on high. He heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, and he saw that which few eyes have ever seen. He was caught up into the third heaven. What draughts of joy the apostle Paul must have had! what lookings into the deep things of God! what soarings into the heights of heaven! Perhaps there was never a man who was more favoured of God; to have his mind expanded, and then to have it filled full with the wisdom and the revelation of the knowledge of the Most High. But ask the apostle Paul whether he believes there is anything better to come, and he tells you, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known." He was evidently expecting something more than he had received; and, beloved, he was not disappointed. There was a heaven as much above all the enjoyments of Paul, as the enjoyments of Paul were above the depressions of his spirit, when he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are children of God who have all that they can need of this world's goods; they seem to be free from earthly care, and they have faith enough to trust their God with regard to the future. Their faith is firm and strong; they have much love to the Redeemer; they are engaged in some delightful work, and the Holy Spirit attends that work with great success. Their days follow steadily one after another, like the waves of the still calm sea. God is with them, and they are greatly blessed; they spread out their roots by the river, their leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever they do, it prospereth; whichever way they turn their hand the Lord their God is with them, in whatsoever land they put their feet they are like Joshua, that land is given to them to be an inheritance to them for ever. But, beloved, even these shall see greater things than they have as yet held. High as their Master has taken them into the house of banqueting, lofty though the room be in which they now feast, the Master shall say to them, "Come up higher."

They shall know more, enjoy more, feel more, do more, possess more. They shall be nearer to Christ ; they shall have richer enjoyments and sweeter employments than they have had; and they shall feel that their Master hath kept his good wine even until now.

Entering into particulars for a moment, very briefly, I must just observe, that there are many aspects under which we may regard the heavenly state, and in each of these we shall have to say, that Christ hath kept the good wine until then. Here on earth the believer enters into *rest* by faith; the Christian enjoys rest even in the wilderness; the promise is fulfilled. "They shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." God giveth to his beloved sleep; there is a peace that passeth all understanding, which we may enjoy even in this land of turmoil, strife, and alarms,—a peace which the worldling knoweth not of, nor can he guess it.

"A holy calm within the heart,
The pledge of glorious rest.
Which for the church of God remains,
The end of cares, the end of pains."

But beloved, drink as we may of the cup of peace, the good wine is kept until a future time. The peace we drink to-day is dashed with some drops of bitter. There are disturbing thoughts; the cares of this world *will* come, doubts *will* arise; live as we may in this world, we must have disquietudes; thorns in the flesh must come. But oh! the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." What good wine shall that be! God hath a sun without a spot, a sky without a cloud, a day without a night, a sea without a wave, a world without a tear. Happy are they who, having passed through this world, have entered into rest, and ceased from their own works, as God did from his, bathing their weary souls in seas of heavenly rest.

View heaven under another aspect. It is a place of *holy company*. In this world we have had some good wine of sweet company. We can tell of many of the precious sons of Zion with whom we have taken sweet counsel; blessed be the Lord; the righteous have not all failed from among men. Some of you can remember golden names that were very dear to you in the days of your youth—of men and women with whom you used to go up to God's house and take sweet counsel. Ah, what words used to drop from their lips, and what sweet balm you had in the days of your sorrow when they comforted and consoled you: and you have friends still left, to whom you look up with some degree of reverence, while they look upon you with intense affection. There are some men that are comforters to your soul, and when you talk to them you feel that their heart answers to your heart, and that you can enjoy union and communion with them. But beloved, the good wine is kept till the last. All the fellowship with the saints that we have had here, is as nothing compared with what we are to enjoy in the world to come. How sweet it is for us to recollect, that in heaven we shall be in the company of the best men, the noblest men, the most mighty men, the most honourable and the most renowned. We shall sit with Moses, and talk with him of all his life of wonders; we shall walk with Joseph, and we shall hear from him of the grace that kept him in his hour of peril; I doubt not you and I shall have the privilege of sitting by the side of David, and hearing him recount the perils and the deliverances through which he passed. The saints of heaven make but one communion, they are not divided into separate classes; we shall be allowed to walk through all the glorious ranks, and hold fellowship with all of them; nor need we doubt but that we shall be able to know them all. There are many reasons which I could not now enumerate, for it would occupy me too much time, that seem to my mind to settle the point, that in heaven we shall know even as we are known, and shall perfectly know each other; and that indeed, makes us long

to be there. "The general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." Oh, to get away from this poor church here, that is full of strifes and divisions, and bickerings and jealousies and animosities—to get away from the society of men that are full of infirmities, although they have much grace, and to get into a place where there shall be no infirmities in those with whom we talk—no hasty tempers,—where we cannot possibly strike a chord that would make a jarring note—when it shall not be in our power to raise among those holy birds of Paradise a cause of strife—when we shall walk in the midst of them all, and see love beaming from every eye, and feel that deep affection is seated in every heart. Oh! that will be the best wine. Are you not longing to drink of it?—to enter into that great church fellowship, and attend those glorious church meetings,

"Where all the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
To bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his wonders known."

Again, look at heaven, if you will, in the point of *knowledge*. We know very much on earth that makes us happy; Jesus Christ hath taught us many things that give us joy and gladness. It *is* a world of ignorance, but still through grace we have entered into the school of the gospel, and we have learned some sweet truths. It is true we are very much like the boy who is beginning to write. We had to make many ugly pothooks and hangers, and we have not yet learned to write the sweet running hand of joy; but nevertheless, the Lord has taught us some great truths to fill our heart with joy;—the great doctrine of election, the knowledge of our redemption, the fact of our security in Christ; these great but simple doctrines have filled our hearts with bliss. But, brethren, the best wine is kept till the last, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall take the book and break the seals thereof, and permit us to read it all, then shall we rejoice indeed, for the best wine will be at our lips. There are old casks of knowledge that contain the richest wine, and Christ shall stave them in, and we shall drink of them to the full. It is not fit that we should know all things now,—we could not bear many things, and therefore Christ keeps them back; but

"There shall you see and hear and know
All you desired or wished below,
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

You may, if you please, look at heaven in another sense—as a place of *manifestations and of joys*. Now this world is a place of manifestations to the believer. Shall I venture for a moment, or even for a second, to talk of manifestations of himself which Christ is pleased to afford to his poor children on earth? No, beloved, your own experience shall supply my lack. I will only say that there are times when the Lord Jesus saith unto his beloved, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves." But, what must be the fellowship of heaven? I fail to-night in attempting to talk to you of the best wine, for this simple reason—I believe there are very few men that can preach of heaven so as to interest you much, for you feel that all we can say is so far behind the reality, that we might as well have let it alone. Baxter might write a *Saint's Rest*, but I am no Baxter—would God I were! The day may come perhaps, when I may talk more copiously of these blessings; but at present, in my own soul, when I begin to talk of the communion of heaven, I seem overcome, I cannot imagine it; for the next thought that always succeeds my first attempt to think of it, is a thought of

overwhelming gratitude, coupled with a kind of fear that this is too good for such an unworthy worm as I. It was a privilege for John to put his head on the Master's bosom, but that is nothing compared with the privilege of lying in his embrace forever. Oh! we must wait until we get there, and as one of old said, "In five minutes you shall know more of heaven than I could tell you in all my life." It needs but that we should see our Lord, that we should fly into his arms, that we should feel his embrace, that we should fall at his feet, and, was I about to say, weep for joy? No, that were impossible, but lie there, as it were dissolved away in ecstasy—to feel that we at least have arrived in that dear place which he hath spoken to us of when he said: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me; in my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you." Truly he hath kept the best wine until the last.

II. And now, WHAT IS OUR LORD'S REASON FOR DOING THIS? That was the second point. Very briefly.

The Lord might have given us the best wine first, but he will not act as the devil doth; he will always make a broad distinction between his dealings and the dealings of Satan.

Again, he will not give us the best wine first, because that is not his good pleasure. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is the only reason why you will get it at all; and the reason why you do not receive it now is because it is not your Father's good pleasure that you should have it just yet.

Again; your Father doth not give you the good wine now, because he is giving you an appetite for it. At the old feasts of the Romans men used to drink bitter things, and all kinds of singular and noxious mixtures, to make them thirsty. Now, in this world, God is, as it were, making his children thirsty, that they may take deeper draughts of heaven. I cannot think that heaven would be so sweet to me if I had not first to dwell on earth. Who knoweth best the sweet of rest? Is it not the labourer? Who understandeth best the joy of peace? Is it not the man who hath dwelt in the land of war? Who knoweth most the sweetness of joy? Is it not the man who hath passed through a world of sorrow? Ye are having your appetites sharpened by these trials; ye are being made ready to receive the fulness of joy that is in the presence of God for ever.

Again, the Lord hath this also in view. He is making you fit for the best wine, that he may be glorified by the trial of your faith. If it were in my power to go to heaven to-night, and I could enter there, yet if I should have a suspicion that there was more to do or more to suffer here, I would infinitely prefer to wait my Father's time; because, methinks, in heaven we shall bless God for all we have suffered. When it is all over, how sweet it will be to talk of it! When you and I shall meet each other in the streets of heaven—and there be some of you that have had but few trials, but few doubtings and fearings, and tribulations and conflicts,—you will talk of how God delivered you; but you will not be able to talk as some of the tried saints will. Ah! what sweet stories some of them will tell! I should like to go by the side of Jonah, and hear how he went down to the bottom of the mountains, and how he thought the earth with her bars was about him for ever. And Jeremiah,—I often think what a deal we shall get out of Jeremiah in eternity,—what *he* will have to tell, who took such plunges into the sea of sorrow! And David, too, the sweet Psalmist, so full of experience, he will never have done talking of what the Lord has done for him! And I think you and I, when we get to heaven, will have enough to think of. As a poor woman once said, when she was in great doubt and fear whether she should be saved at all; she said in her prayer, "Lord, if thou wilt save me, only one thing I can promise thee. If thou wilt take me to heaven thou shalt never hear the last

of it, for I will praise thee while immortality lasts, and I will tell the angels thou savedst ME." And this is the constant burden of heaven. They are each one wondering that he is there. Beloved, if we did not have to pass through these trials and troubles, and these soul conflicts, and such like, we should have very little to talk about in heaven. I have no doubt that the babes in paradise are as happy as the rest, but I do not wish to be a babe in paradise. I bless God I did not go to heaven when an infant: I shall have the more to praise God for, when I shall look back through a life of mercies, a life of trials, and yet a life of sustaining grace. There will be a louder song, because the deeper have been our troubles. These, I think, are some of God's reasons.

III. And now, dear brethren and sisters, what shall I say about the LESSON WE ARE TO LEARN FROM THIS FACT of Christ keeping the best wine until now? Going home the other night I noticed the difference between the horse's pace in coming here and going home, and I thought to myself, "Ah! the horse goes well, because he is going home;" and the thought struck me, "How well a Christian ought to go, cause he is going home." You know, if we were going *from* home, every rough stone in the road might check us, and we might need a good deal of whip to make us go. But it is going home. Bless God, every step we take is going home. It may be knee-deep in trouble, but it is all on the road; we may be ankle-deep in fear, but it is going home; I may stumble, but I always stumble homewards. All my afflictions and griefs, when they cast me down, but cast me onwards towards heaven. The mariner does not mind the waves, if every wave sends him nearer his haven, and he does not care how loudly howl the winds, if they only blow him nearer port. That is the Christian's happy lot: he is going homeward. Let that cheer thee, Christian, and make thee travel on joyfully, not needing the whip to urge thee to duty, but always going on with alacrity through duty and through trial, because thou art going homeward.

Again: if we have the best things to come dear friends, do not let us be discontented. Let us put up with a few of the bad things now, for they only seem to be so. A traveller who is on a journey in a hurry, if he has to stay for a night at an inn, he may grumble a little at the want of accommodation, but he does not say very much, because he is off to-morrow, he is only stopping a short time at the inn; he says, "I shall get home to-morrow night," and then he thinks of the joys of home, and does not care about the discomforts of his hard journey. You and I are travellers. It will soon be over. We may have had but a very few shillings a week compared with our neighbour, but we shall be equal with him when we get there. He may have had a large house, with a great many rooms, while we had, it may be only one upper room; ah! we shall have as large a mansion as he in Paradise. We shall soon be at the journey's end, and then the road will not signify, long as we have got there. Come! let us put up with these few inconveniences on the road, for the best wine is coming; let us pour away all the vinegar of murmuring, for the best wine shall come.

Once more; if the Christian has the best wine to come, why should he envy the worldling? David did; he was discontented when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, and you and I are often tempted to do it; but you know what we ought to say when we see the wicked prosper, when we see them happy, and full of delights of sinful pleasure. We ought to say, "Ah! my good wine is to come; I can bear that you should have your turn; my turn will come afterwards; I can be put off with these things, and lie with Lazarus at the gate, while the dogs lick my sores; my turn is to come, when the angels shall carry me into Abraham's bosom, and your turn is to come too, when in hell you lift up your eyes, being in torments.

Christian, what more shall I say to thee?—though there be a thousand lessons to learn from this, that the best wine is kept to the last. "Take heed to thyself, that *thou* also keepest thy good

wine until the last. The further thou goest on the road, seek to bring to thy Saviour the more acceptable sacrifice. Thou hadst little faith years ago: man! bring out the good wine now! Seek to have more faith. Thy Master is better to thee every day, and thou shalt see him to be the best of all Masters and friends. Seek to be better to thy Master every day; be more generous to his cause, more active to labour for him, more kind to his people, more diligent in prayer; and take heed that as thou growest in years thou growest in grace, so that when thou comest at last to the river Jordan, and the Master shall give thee the best wine, thou mayest also give to him the best wine, and praise him most loudly when the battle shall just be over, and when the whirlwind is dying away into the everlasting peace of paradise.”

And now, dear friends, I am conscious that I have totally failed in endeavouring to bring forth this good wine; but it is written that God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit, but that ear hath not heard it. Now, if I had told it to you to-night your ear would have heard it, and the text would not have been true; and as I have unwittingly proved the truth of this Scripture, I cannot be very sorry at having helped to witness the truth of my Master's word. Only this I say,—the nearer you live to Christ the nearer you will be to heaven, for if there is one place next door to Pisgah it is Calvary. It may seem strange, but if you live much on Calvary you live very near Nebo; for although Moses may have seen Canaan from Nebo, I have never seen heaven anywhere but close to Calvary. When I have seen my Saviour crucified, then I have seen him glorified; when I have read my name written in his blood, then I have seen afterwards my mansion which he has prepared for me. When I have seen my sins washed away, then I have seen the white robe that I am to wear for ever. Live near to the Saviour, man, and you shall not be very far off heaven. Recollect, after all, it is not far to heaven. It is only one gentle sigh, and we are there. We talk of it as a land very far off, but close it is, and who knows but that the spirits of the just are here to-night? Heaven is close to us; we cannot tell where it is, but this we know, that it is not a far off land. It is so near, that, swifter than thought, we shall be there, emancipated from our care and woe, and blessed for ever.

Compel Them to Come In

A Sermon

(No. 227)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 5th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Compel them to come in.”—Luke 14:23.

I FEEL in such a haste to go out and obey this commandment this morning, by compelling those to come in who are now tarrying in the highways and hedges, that I cannot wait for an introduction, but must at once set about my business.

Hear then, O ye that are strangers to the truth as it is in Jesus—hear then the message that I have to bring you. Ye have fallen, fallen in your father Adam; ye have fallen also in yourselves, by your daily sin and your constant iniquity; you have provoked the anger of the Most High; and as assuredly as you have sinned, so certainly must God punish you if you persevere in your iniquity, for the Lord is a God of justice, and will by no means spare the guilty. But have you not heard, hath it not long been spoken in your ears, that God, in his infinite mercy, has devised a way whereby, without any infringement upon his honour, he can have mercy upon you, the guilty and the undeserving? To you I speak; and my voice is unto you, O sons of men; Jesus Christ, very God of very God, hath descended from heaven, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Begotten of the Holy Ghost, he was born of the Virgin Mary; he lived in this world a life of exemplary holiness, and of the deepest suffering, till at last he gave himself up to die for our sins, “the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” And now the plan of salvation is simply declared unto you—“Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” For you who have violated all the precepts of God, and have disdained his mercy and dared his vengeance, there is yet mercy proclaimed, for “whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “For 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;” “whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out, for he is able also to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Now all that God asks of you—and this he gives you—is that you will simply look at his bleeding dying son, and trust your souls in the hands of him whose name alone can save from death and hell. Is it not a marvelous thing, that the proclamation of this gospel does not receive the unanimous consent of men? One would think that as soon as ever this was preached, “That whosoever believeth shall have eternal life,” every one of you, “casting away every man his sins and his iniquities,” would lay hold on Jesus Christ, and look alone to his cross. But alas! such is the desperate evil of our nature, such the pernicious depravity of our character, that this message is despised, the invitation to the gospel feast is rejected, and there are many of you who are this day enemies of God by wicked works, enemies to the God who preaches Christ to you to-day, enemies to him who sent his Son to give his life a ransom for many. Strange I say it is that it should be so, yet nevertheless it is the fact, and hence the necessity for the command of the text,—“Compel them to come in.”

Children of God, ye who have believed, I shall have little or nothing to say to you this morning; I am going straight to my business—I am going after those that will not come—those that are in

the byways and hedges, and God going with me, it is my duty now to fulfil this command, “Compel them to come in.”

First, I must, *find you out*; secondly, I will go to work to *compel you to come in*.

I. First, I must FIND YOU OUT. If you read the verses that precede the text, you will find an amplification of this command: “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind;” and then, afterwards, “Go out into the highways,” bring in the vagrants, the highwaymen, “and into the hedges,” bring in those that have no resting-place for their heads, and are lying under the hedges to rest, bring them in also, and “compel them to come in.” Yes, I see you this morning, you that are *poor*. I am to compel *you* to come in. You are poor in circumstances, but this is no barrier to the kingdom of heaven, for God hath not exempted from his grace the man that shivers in rags, and who is destitute of bread. In fact, if there be any distinction made, the distinction is on your side, and for your benefit—“Unto you is the word of salvation sent”; “For the poor have the gospel preached unto them.” But especially I must speak to you who are *poor, spiritually*. You have no faith, you have no virtue, you have no good work, you have no grace, and what is poverty worse still, you have no hope. Ah, my Master has sent *you* a gracious invitation. Come and welcome to the marriage feast of his love. “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.” Come, I must lay hold upon you, though you be defiled with foulest filth, and though you have nought but rags upon your back, though your own righteousness has become as filthy clouts, yet must I lay hold upon you, and invite you first, and even compel you to come in.

And now I see you again. You are not only poor, but you are *maimed*. There was a time when you thought you could work out your own salvation without God’s help, when you could perform good works, attend to ceremonies, and get to heaven by yourselves; but now you are maimed, the sword of the law has cut off your hands, and now you can work no longer; you say, with bitter sorrow—

“The best performance of my hands,
Dares not appear before thy throne.”

You have lost all power now to obey the law; you feel that when you would do good, evil is present with you. You are maimed; you have given up, as a forlorn hope, all attempt to save yourself, because you are maimed and your arms are gone. But you are worse off than that, for if you could not work your way to heaven, yet you could walk your way there along the road by faith; but you are maimed in the feet as well as in the hands; you feel that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent, that you cannot obey the stipulations of the gospel. You feel that you are utterly undone, powerless in every respect to do anything that can be pleasing to God. In fact, you are crying out—

“Oh, could I but believe,
Then all would easy be,
I would, but cannot, Lord relieve,
My help must come from thee.”

To you am I sent also. Before *you* am I to lift up the blood-stained banner of the cross, to you am I to preach this gospel, “Whoso calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;” and unto you am I to cry, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.”

There is yet another class. You are *halt*. You are halting between two opinions. You are sometimes seriously inclined, and at another time worldly gaiety calls you away. What little progress you do make in religion is but a limp. You have a little strength, but that is so little that you make

but painful progress. Ah, limping brother, to you also is the word of this salvation sent. Though you halt between two opinions, the Master sends me to you with this message: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him." Consider thy ways; set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live. Because I will do this, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel! Halt no longer, but decide for God and his truth.

And yet I see another class,—*the blind*. Yes, you that cannot see yourselves, that think yourselves good when you are full of evil, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness; to you am I sent. You, blind souls that cannot see your lost estate, that do not believe that sin is so exceedingly sinful as it is, and who will not be persuaded to think that God is a just and righteous God, to you am I sent. To you too that cannot see the Saviour, that see no beauty in him that you should desire him; who see no excellence in virtue, no glories in religion, no happiness in serving God, no delight in being his children; to you, also, am I sent. Ay, to whom am I not sent if I take my text? For it goes further than this—it not only gives a particular description, so that each individual case may be met, but afterwards it makes a general sweep, and says, "Go into the highways and hedges." Here we bring in all ranks and conditions of men—my lord upon his horse in the highway, and the woman trudging about her business, the thief waylaying the traveller—all these are in the highway, and they are all to be compelled to come in, and there away in the hedges there lie some poor souls whose refuges of lies are swept away, and who are seeking not to find some little shelter for their weary heads, to you, also, are we sent this morning. This is the universal command—compel them to come in.

Now, I pause after having described the character, I pause to look at the herculean labour that lies before me. Well did Melanchthon say, "Old Adam was too strong for young Melanchthon." As well might a little child seek to compel a Samson, as I seek to lead a sinner to the cross of Christ. And yet my Master sends me about the errand. Lo, I see the great mountain before me of human depravity and stolid indifference, but by faith I cry, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Does my Master say, compel them to come in? Then, though the sinner be like Samson and I a child, I shall lead him with a thread. If God saith *do* it, if I attempt it in faith *it shall be done*; and if with a groaning, struggling, and weeping heart, I so seek this day to compel sinners to come to Christ, the sweet compulsions of the Holy Spirit shall go with every word, and some indeed shall be compelled to come in.

II. And now to the work—directly to the work. Unconverted, unreconciled, unregenerate men and women, I am to COMPEL YOU TO COME IN. Permit me first of all to accost you in the highways of sin and tell you over again my errand. The King of heaven this morning sends a gracious invitation to you. He says, "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:" "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." Dear brother, it makes my heart rejoice to think that I should have such good news to tell you, and yet I confess my soul is heavy because I see you do not think it good news, but turn away from it, and do not give it due regard. Permit me to tell you what the King has done for you. He knew your guilt, he foresaw that you would ruin yourself. He knew that his justice would demand your blood, and in order that this difficulty might be escaped, that his justice might have its full due, and that you might yet be saved, *Jesus Christ hath died*. Will you just for a moment glance at this picture. You see that man there on his knees in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood. You see this next: you see that miserable sufferer tied to a

pillar and lashed with terrible scourges, till the shoulder bones are seen like white islands in the midst of a sea of blood. Again you see this third picture; it is the same man hanging on the cross with hands extended, and with feet nailed fast, dying, groaning, bleeding; methought the picture spoke and said, "It is finished." Now all this hath Jesus Christ of Nazareth done, in order that God might consistently with his justice pardon sin; and the message to you this morning is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." That is trust him, renounce thy works, and thy ways, and set thine heart alone on this man, who gave himself for sinners.

Well brother, I have told you the message, what sayest thou unto it? Do you turn away? You tell me it is nothing to you; you cannot listen to it; that you will hear me by-and-by; but you will go your way this day and attend to your farm and merchandize. Stop brother, I was not told merely to tell you and then go about my business. No; I am told to compel you to come in; and permit me to observe to you before I further go, that there is one thing I can say—and to which God is my witness this morning, that I am in earnest with you in my desire that you should comply with this command of God. You may despise your own salvation, but I do not despise it; you may go away and forget what you shall hear, but you will please to remember that the things I now say cost me many a groan ere I came here to utter them. My inmost soul is speaking out to you, my poor brother, when I beseech you by him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, consider my master's message which he bids me now address to you.

But do you spurn it? Do you still refuse it? Then I must change my tone a minute. I will not merely tell you the message, and invite you as I do with all earnestness, and sincere affection—I will go further. Sinner, in God's name I *command* you to repent and believe. Do you ask me whence my authority? I am an ambassador of heaven. My credentials, some of them secret, and in my own heart; and others of them open before you this day in the seals of my ministry, sitting and standing in this hall, where God has given me many souls for my hire. As God the everlasting one hath given me a commission to preach his gospel, I command you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; not on my own authority, but on the authority of him who said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and then annexed this solemn sanction, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Reject my message, and remember "He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." An ambassador is not to stand below the man with whom he deals, for we stand higher. If the minister chooses to take his proper rank, girded with the omnipotence of God, and anointed with his holy unction, he is to command men, and speak with all authority compelling them to come in: "command, exhort, rebuke with all long-suffering."

But do you turn away and say you will not be commanded? Then again will I change my note. If that avails not, all other means shall be tried. My brother, I come to you simple of speech, and I *exhort* you to flee to Christ. O my brother, dost thou know what a loving Christ he is? Let me tell thee from my own soul what I know of him. I, too, once despised him. He knocked at the door of my heart and I refused to open it. He came to me, times without number, morning by morning, and night by night; he checked me in my conscience and spoke to me by his Spirit, and when, at last, the thunders of the law prevailed in my conscience, I thought that Christ was cruel and unkind. O I can never forgive myself that I should have thought so ill of him. But what a loving reception did I have when I went to him. I thought he would smite me, but his hand was not clenched in anger but opened wide in mercy. I thought full sure that his eyes would dart lightning-flashes of wrath

upon me; but, instead thereof, they were full of tears. He fell upon my neck and kissed me; he took off my rags and did clothe me with his righteousness, and caused my soul to sing aloud for joy; while in the house of my heart and in the house of his church there was music and dancing, because his son that he had lost was found, and he that was dead was made alive. I exhort you, then, to look to Jesus Christ and to be lightened. Sinner, you will never regret,—I will be bondsman for my Master that you will never regret it,—you will have no sigh to go back to your state of condemnation; you shall go out of Egypt and shall go into the promised land and shall find it flowing with milk and honey. The trials of Christian life you shall find heavy, but you will find grace will make them light. And as for the joys and delights of being a child of God, if I lie this day you shall charge me with it in days to come. If you will taste and see that the Lord is good, I am not afraid but that you shall find that he is not only good, but better than human lips ever can describe.

I know not what arguments to use with you. I appeal to your own self-interests. Oh my poor friend, would it not be better for you to be reconciled to the God of heaven, than to be his enemy? What are you getting by opposing God? Are you the happier for being his enemy? Answer, pleasure-seeker; hast thou found delights in that cup? Answer me, self-righteous man: hast thou found rest for the sole of thy foot in all thy works? Oh thou that goest about to establish thine own righteousness, I charge thee let conscience speak. Hast thou found it to be a happy path? Ah, my friend, “Wherefore dost thou spend thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labour for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” I exhort you by everything that is sacred and solemn, everything that is important and eternal, flee for your lives, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, stay not until you have proved, and found an interest in the blood of Jesus Christ, that blood which cleanseth us from all sin. Are you still cold and indifferent? Will not the blind man permit me to lead him to the feast? Will not my maimed brother put his hand upon my shoulder and permit me to assist him to the banquet? Will not the poor man allow me to walk side-by-side with him? Must I use some stronger words. Must I use some other compulsion to compel you to come in? Sinners, this one thing I am resolved upon this morning, if you be not saved ye shall be without excuse. Ye, from the grey-headed down to the tender age of childhood, if ye this day lay not hold on Christ, your blood shall be on your own head. If there be power in man to bring his fellow, (as there is when man is helped by the Holy Spirit) that power shall be exercised this morning, God helping me. Come, I am not to be put off by your rebuffs; if my exhortation fails, I must come to something else. My brother, I *entreat* you, I entreat you stop and consider. Do you know what it is you are rejecting this morning? You are rejecting Christ, your only Saviour. “Other foundation can no man lay;” “there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved.” My brother, I cannot bear that ye should do this, for I remember what you are forgetting: the day is coming when you will want a Saviour. It is not long ere weary months shall have ended, and your strength begin to decline; your pulse shall fail you, your strength shall depart, and you and the grim monster—death, must face each other. What will you do in the swellings of Jordan without a Saviour? Death-beds are stony things without the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an awful thing to die anyhow; he that hath the best hope, and the most triumphant faith, finds that death is not a thing to laugh at. It is a terrible thing to pass from the seen to the unseen, from the mortal to the immortal, from time to eternity, and you will find it hard to go through the iron gates of death without the sweet wings of angels to conduct you to the portals of the skies. It will be a hard thing to die without Christ. I cannot help thinking of you. I see you acting the suicide this morning, and I picture myself standing at your

bedside and hearing your cries, and knowing that you are dying without hope. I cannot bear that. I think I am standing by your coffin now, and looking into your clay-cold face, and saying. "This man despised Christ and neglected the great salvation." I think what bitter tears I shall weep then, if I think that I have been unfaithful to you, and how those eyes fast closed in death, shall seem to chide me and say, "Minister, I attended the music hall, but you were not in earnest with me; you amused me, you preached to me, but you did not plead with me. You did not know what Paul meant when he said, 'As though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'"

I entreat you let this message enter your heart for another reason. I picture myself standing at the bar of God. As the Lord liveth, the day of judgment is coming. You believe that? You are not an infidel; your conscience would not permit you to doubt the Scripture. Perhaps you may have pretended to do so, but you cannot. You feel there must be a day when God shall judge the world in righteousness. I see you standing in the midst of that throng, and the eye of God is fixed on you. It seems to you that he is not looking anywhere else, but only upon you, and he summons you before him; and he reads your sins, and he cries, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell!" My hearer, I cannot bear to think of you in that position; it seems as if every hair on my head must stand on end to think of any hearer of mine being damned. Will you picture yourselves in that position? The word has gone forth, "Depart, ye cursed." Do you see the pit as it opens to swallow you up? Do you listen to the shrieks and the yells of those who have preceded you to that eternal lake of torment? Instead of picturing the scene, I turn to you with the words of the inspired prophet, and I say, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Oh! my brother, I cannot let you put away religion thus; no, I think of what is to come after death. I should be destitute of all humanity if I should see a person about to poison himself, and did not dash away the cup; or if I saw another about to plunge from London Bridge, if I did not assist in preventing him from doing so; and I should be worse than a fiend if I did not now, with all love, and kindness, and earnestness, beseech you to "lay hold on eternal life," "to labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life."

Some hyper-calvinist would tell me I am wrong in so doing. I cannot help it. I must do it. As I must stand before my Judge at last, I feel that I shall not make full proof of my ministry unless I entreat with many tears that ye would be saved, that ye would look unto Jesus Christ and receive his glorious salvation. But does not this avail? are all our entreaties lost upon you; do you turn a deaf ear? Then again I change my note. Sinner, I have pleaded with you as a man pleadeth with his friend, and were it for my *own* life I could not speak more earnestly this morning than I do speak concerning *yours*. I did feel earnest about my own soul, but not a whit more than I do about the souls of my congregation this morning; and therefore, if ye put away these entreaties I have something else:—I must *threaten* you. You shall not always have such warnings as these. A day is coming, when hushed shall be the voice of every gospel minister, at least for you; for your ear shall be cold in death. It shall not be any more threatening; it shall be the fulfillment of the threatening. There shall be no promise, no proclamations of pardon and of mercy; no peace-speaking blood, but you shall be in the land where the Sabbath is all swallowed up in everlasting nights of misery, and where the preachings of the gospel are forbidden because they would be unavailing. I charge you then, listen to this voice that now addresses your conscience; for if not, God shall speak to you in his wrath, and say unto you in his hot displeasure, "I called and ye refused; I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; therefore will I mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your

fear cometh." Sinner, I threaten you again. Remember, it is but a short time you may have to hear these warnings. You imagine that your life will be long, but do you know how short it is? Have you ever tried to think how frail you are? Did you ever see a body when it has been cut in pieces by the anatomist? Did you ever see such a marvelous thing as the human frame?

"Strange, a harp of a thousand strings,
Should keep in tune so long."

Let but one of those cords be twisted, let but a mouthful of food go in the wrong direction, and you may die. The slightest chance, as we have it, may send you swift to death, when God wills it. Strong men have been killed by the smallest and slightest accident, and so may you. In the chapel, in the house of God, men have dropped down dead. How often do we hear of men falling in our streets—rolling out of time into eternity, by some sudden stroke. And are you sure that heart of your's is quite sound? Is the blood circulating with all accuracy? Are you quite sure of that? And if it be so, how long shall it be? O, perhaps there are some of you here that shall never see Christmas-day; it may be the mandate has gone forth already, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." Out of this vast congregation, I might with accuracy tell how many will be dead in a year; but certain it is that the whole of us shall never meet together again in any one assembly. Some out of this vast crowd, perhaps some two or three, shall depart ere the new year shall be ushered in. I remind you, then, my brother, that either the gate of salvation may be shut, or else you may be out of the place where the gate of mercy stands. Come, then, let the threatening have power with you. I do not threaten because I would alarm without cause, but in hopes that a brother's threatening may drive you to the place where God hath prepared the feast of the gospel. And now, *must I turn hopelessly away?* Have I exhausted all that I can say? No, I will come to you again. Tell me what it is, my brother, that keeps you from Christ. I hear one say, "Oh, sir, it is because I feel myself too guilty." That cannot be, my friend, that cannot be. "But, sir, I am the chief of sinners." Friend, you are not. The chief of sinners died and went to heaven many years ago; his name was Saul of Tarsus, afterwards called Paul the apostle. He was the chief of sinners, I know he spoke the truth. "No," but you say still, "I am too vile." You cannot be viler than the *chief* of sinners. You must, at least, be second worst. Even supposing you are the worst now alive, you are second worst, for he was chief. But suppose you are the worst, is not that the very reason why you should come to Christ. The worse a man is, the more reason he should go to the hospital or physician. The more poor you are, the more reason you should accept the charity of another. Now, Christ does not want any merits of your's. He gives freely. The worse you are, the more welcome you are. But let me ask you a question: Do you think you will ever get better by stopping away from Christ? If so, you know very little as yet of the way of salvation at all. No, sir, the longer you stay, the worse you will grow; your hope will grow weaker, your despair will become stronger; the nail with which Satan has fastened you down will be more firmly clenched, and you will be less hopeful than ever. Come, I beseech you, recollect there is nothing to be gained by delay, but by delay everything may be lost. "But," cries another, "I feel I cannot believe." No, my friend, and you never will believe if you look first at your believing. Remember, I am not come to invite you to faith, but am come to invite you to Christ. But you say, "What is the difference?" Why, just this, if you first of all say, "I want to believe a thing," you never do it. But your first inquiry must be, "What is this thing that I am to believe?" Then will faith come as the consequence of that search. Our first business has not to do with faith, but with Christ. Come, I beseech you, on Calvary's mount, and see the cross. Behold the Son of God, he who made the heavens and the earth, dying for your sins. Look to him,

is there not power in him to save? Look at his face so full of pity. Is there not love in his heart to prove him *willing* to save? Sure sinner, the sight of Christ will help thee to believe. Do not believe first, and then go to Christ, or else thy faith will be a worthless thing; go to Christ without any faith, and cast thyself upon him, sink or swim. But I hear another cry, "Oh sir, you do not know how often I have been invited, how long I have rejected the Lord." I do not know, and I do not want to know; all I know is that my Master has sent me, to compel you to come in; so come along with you now. You may have rejected a thousand invitations; don't make this the thousandth-and-one. You have been up to the house of God, and you have only been gospel hardened. But do I not see a tear in your eye; come, my brother, don't be hardened by this morning's sermon. O, Spirit of the living God, come and melt this heart for it has never been melted, and compel him to come in! I cannot let you go on such idle excuses as that; if you have lived so many years slighting Christ, there are so many reasons why now you should not slight him. But did I hear you whisper that this was not a convenient time? Then what must I say to you? When will that convenient time come? Shall it come when you are in hell? Will that time be convenient? Shall it come when you are on your dying bed, and the death throttle is in your throat—shall it come then? Or when the burning sweat is scalding your brow; and then again, when the cold clammy sweat is there, shall those be convenient times? When pains are racking you, and you are on the borders of the tomb? No, sir, this morning is the convenient time. May God make it so. Remember, I have no authority to ask you to come to Christ *to-morrow*. The Master has given you no invitation to come to him next Tuesday. The invitation is, "*To-day* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation," for the Spirit saith "*to-day*." "Come *now* and let us reason together;" why should you put it off? It may be the last warning you shall ever have. Put it off, and you may never weep again in chapel. You may never have so earnest a discourse addressed to you. You may not be pleaded with as I would plead with you now. You may go away, and God may say, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." He shall throw the reins upon your neck; and then, mark—your course is sure, but it is sure damnation and swift destruction.

And now again, is it all in vain? Will you not now come to Christ? Then what more can I do? I have but one more resort, and that shall be tried. I can be permitted to weep for you; I can be allowed to pray for you. You shall scorn the address if you like; you shall laugh at the preacher; you shall call him fanatic if you will; he will not chide you, he will bring no accusation against you to the great Judge. Your offence, so far as he is concerned, is forgiven before it is committed; but you will remember that the message that you are rejecting this morning is a message from one who loves you, and it is given to you also by the lips of one who loves you. You will recollect that you may play your soul away with the devil, that you may listlessly think it a matter of no importance; but there lives at least one who is in earnest about your soul, and one who before he came here wrestled with his God for strength to preach to you, and who when he has gone from this place will not forget his hearers of this morning. I say again, when words fail us we can give tears—for words and tears are the arms with which gospel ministers compel men to come in. You do not know, and I suppose could not believe, how anxious a man whom God has called to the ministry feels about his congregation, and especially about some of them. I heard but the other day of a young man who attended here a long time, and his father's hope was that he would be brought to Christ. He became acquainted, however, with an infidel; and now he neglects his business, and lives in a daily course of sin. I saw his father's poor wan face; I did not ask him to tell me the story himself, for I felt it was raking up a trouble and opening a sore; I fear, sometimes, that good man's grey hairs may be

brought with sorrow to the grave. Young men, you do not pray for yourselves, but your mothers wrestle for you. You will not think of your own souls, but your fathers anxiety is exercised for you. I have been at prayer meetings, when I have heard children of God pray there, and they could not have prayed with more earnestness and more intensity of anguish if they had been each of them seeking their own soul's salvation. And is it not strange that we should be ready to move heaven and earth for your salvation, and that still you should have no thought for *yourselves*, no regard to eternal things?

Now I turn for one moment to some here. There are some of you here members of Christian churches, who make a profession of religion, but unless I be mistaken in you—and I shall be happy if I am—your profession is a lie. You do not live up to it, you dishonour it; you can live in the perpetual practice of absenting yourselves from God's house, if not in sins worse than that. Now I ask such of you who do not adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour, do you imagine that you can call me your pastor, and yet that my soul cannot tremble over you and in secret weep for you? Again, I say it may be but little concern to you how you defile the garments of your Christianity, but it is a great concern to God's hidden ones, who sigh and cry, and groan for the iniquities of the professors of Zion.

Now does anything else remain to the minister besides weeping and prayer? Yes, there is one thing else. God has given to his servants not the power of regeneration, but he has given them something akin to it. It is impossible for any man to regenerate his neighbour; and yet how are men born to God? Does not the apostle say of such an one that he was begotten by him in his bonds. Now the minister has a power given him of God, to be considered both the father and the mother of those born to God, for the apostle said he travailed in birth for souls till Christ was formed in them. What can we do then? We can now appeal to the Spirit. I know I have preached the gospel, that I have preached it earnestly; I challenge my Master to honour his own promise. He has said it shall not return unto me void, and it shall not. It is in his hands, not mine. I cannot compel you, but thou O Spirit of God who hast the key of the heart, thou canst compel. Did you ever notice in that chapter of the Revelation, where it says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," a few verses before, the same person is described, as he who hath the key of David. So that if knocking will not avail, he has the key and can and will come in. Now if the knocking of an earnest minister prevail not with you this morning, there remains still that secret opening of the heart by the Spirit, so that you shall be compelled.

I thought it my duty to labour with you as though *I* must do it; now I throw it into my Master's hands. It cannot be his will that we should travail in birth, and yet not bring forth spiritual children. It is with *him*; he is master of the heart, and the day shall declare it, that some of you constrained by sovereign grace have become the willing captives of the all-conquering Jesus, and have bowed your hearts to him through the sermon of this morning.

[Mr. Spurgeon concluded with a very interesting anecdote, but as its insertion would make the sermon too long for a penny number, the publishers have decided to print it as one of the "New Park Street Tracts."]

The Blood

A Sermon

(No. 228)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 12th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”—Exodus 12:13.

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS SAFE. “All the saints are in *his* hand;” and the hand of God is a place for safety, as well as a place of honour. Nothing can hurt the man who has made his refuge God. “Thou hast given commandment to save me,” said David; and every believing child of God may say the same. Plague, famine, war, tempest,—all these have received commandment of God to save his people. Though the earth should rock beneath the feet of man, yet the Christian, may stand fast, and though the heavens should be rolled up, and the firmament should pass away like a scroll that is burned by fervent heat, yet need not a Christian fear; God’s people *shall* be saved: if they cannot be saved under the heavens, they shall be saved in the heavens; if there be no safety for them in the time of trouble upon this solid earth, they shall be “caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall they be ever with the Lord,” and ever safe.

Now, at the time of which this Book of Exodus speaks, Egypt was exposed to a terrible peril. Jehovah himself was about to march through the streets of all the cities of Egypt. It was not merely a destroying angel, but Jehovah himself; for thus it is written, “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast.” No one less than I AM, the great God, had vowed to “cut Rahab” with the sword of vengeance. Tremble, ye inhabitants of the earth, for God has come down among you, provoked, incensed, and at last awakened from his seeming sleep of patience. He has girded on his terrible sword, and he has come to smite you. Quake for fear, all ye that have sin within you, for when God walks through the streets, sword in hand, will he not smite you all? But hark! the voice of covenant mercy speaks, God’s children are safe, even though an angry God be in the streets. As they are safe from the rod of the wicked, so are they safe from the sword of justice—always and ever safe; for there was not a hair of the head of an Israelite that was so much as touched; Jehovah kept them safe beneath his wings. While he did rend his enemies like a lion, yet did he protect his children, every one of them. But, beloved, while this is always true, that God’s people are safe, there is another fact that is equally true, namely, that God’s people are only safe through *the blood*. The reason why God spares his people in the time of calamity is, because he sees the blood-mark on their brow. What is the basis of that great truth, that all things work together for good to them that love God? What is the cause that all things so produce good to them, but this, that they are bought with the precious blood of Christ? Therefore it is that nothing can hurt them, because *the blood* is upon them, and every evil thing must pass them by. It was so that night in Egypt. God himself was abroad with his sword; but he spared them, because he saw the blood-mark on the lintel and on the two sideposts. And so it is with us. In the day when God in his fierce anger shall come forth from his dwelling place, to affright the earth with terrors and to condemn the wicked, we shall be secure, if covered with the Saviour’s righteousness, and sprinkled with his blood, we are found in him.

Do I hear some one say, that I am now coming to an old subject? This thought struck me when I was preparing for preaching, that I should have to tell you an old story over again; and just as I was thinking of that, happening to turn over a book, I met with an anecdote of Judson the missionary to Burmah. He had passed through unheard-of hardships, and had performed dangerous exploits for his Master. He returned, after thirty years' absence, to America. "Announced to address an assembly in a provincial town, and a vast concourse having gathered from great distances to hear him, he rose at the close of the usual service, and, as all eyes were fixed and every year attent, he spoke for about fifteen minutes, with much pathos, of the precious Saviour, of what he had done for us, and of what we owed to him; and he sat down, visibly affected. "The people are very much disappointed," said a friend to him on their way home; "they wonder you did not talk of *something else*." "Why what did they want?" he replied: "I presented, to the best of my ability, the most interesting subject in the world." "But they wanted something different—a story" "Well, I am sure I gave them a story—the most thrilling one that can be conceived of." "But they had heard it before. They wanted something new of a man who had just come from the antipodes." "Then I am glad they have it to say, that a man coming from the antipodes had nothing better to tell than the wondrous story of the dying love of Jesus. My business is to preach the gospel of Christ; and when I can speak at all, I dare not trifle with my commission. When I looked upon those people to-day, and remembering where I should next meet them, how could I stand up and furnish food to vain curiosity—tickle their fancy with amusing stories, however decently strung together on a thread of religion? That is not what Christ meant by preaching the gospel. And then how could I hereafter meet the fearful charge, 'I gave you one opportunity to tell them of ME; you spent it in describing your own adventures!'" So I thought. Well, if Judson told the old story after he had been thirty years away, and could not find anything better, I will just go back to this old subject, which is always new and always fresh to us—the *precious blood of Christ*, by which we are saved.

First, then, *the blood*; secondly, *its efficacy*; thirdly, *the one condition appended to it*;—"When I see the blood;" and fourthly, *the practical lesson*.

I. First, then, THE BLOOD ITSELF. In the case of the Israelites it was the blood of the Paschal Lamb. In our case, beloved, it is the blood of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

1. The blood of which I have solemnly to speak this morning, is, first of all, the blood of a *divinely appointed victim*. Jesus Christ did not come into this world unappointed. He was sent here by his Father. This indeed is one of the underlying ground-works of the Christian's hope. We can rely upon Jesus Christ's acceptance by his Father, because his Father ordained him to be our Saviour from before the foundation of the world. Sinner! when I preach to thee the blood of Christ this morning, I am preaching something that is well pleasing to God; for God himself did choose Christ to be the Redeemer; he himself set him apart from before the foundation of the world, and he himself, even Jehovah the Father, did lay upon him the iniquity of *us* all. The sacrifice of Christ is not brought to you without warrant; it is not a something which Christ did surreptitiously and in secret; it was written in the great decree from all eternity, that he was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. As he himself said, "Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do *thy will* O God." It is God's will that the blood of Jesus should be shed. Jesus is God's chosen Saviour for men; and here, when addressing the ungodly, here, I say, is one potent argument with them. Sinner! You may trust in Christ, that he is able to save you from the wrath of God, for God himself has appointed him to save.

2. Christ Jesus, too, like the lamb, was not only a divinely appointed victim, but he was *spotless*. Had there been one sin in Christ, he had not been capable of being our Saviour; but he was without spot or blemish—without original sin, without any practical transgression. In him was no sin, though he was “tempted in all points like as we are.” Here, again, is the reason why the blood is able to save, because it is the blood of an innocent victim, a victim the only reason for whose death lay in us, and not in himself. When the poor innocent lamb was put to death, by the head of the household of Egypt, I can imagine that thoughts like these ran through his mind. “Ah” he would say, as he struck the knife into the lamb, “This poor creature dies, not for any guilt that it has ever had, but to show me that I am guilty, and that I deserved to die like this.” Turn, then, your eye to the cross, and see Jesus bleeding there and dying for you. Remember,

“For sins not his own, he died to atone;”

Sin had no foothold in him, never troubled him. The prince of this world came and looked, but he said, “I have nothing in Christ; there is no room for me to plant my foot—no piece of corrupt ground, which I may call my own.” O sinner, the blood of Jesus is able to save thee, because he was perfectly innocent himself, and “he died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.”

But some will say, “Whence has the blood of Christ such power to save?” My reply is, not only because God appointed that blood, and because it was the blood of an innocent and spotless being, but because *Christ himself was God*. If Christ were a mere man, my hearers, you could not be exhorted to trust him; were he ever so spotless and holy, there would be no efficacy in his blood to save; but Christ was “very God of very God;” the blood that Jesus shed was Godlike blood. It was the blood of man, for he was man like ourselves; but the divinity was so allied with the manhood, that the blood derived efficacy from it. Can you imagine what must be the value of the blood of God’s own dear Son? No, you cannot put an estimate upon it that should so much as reach to a millionth part of its preciousness. I know you esteem that blood as beyond all price if you have been washed in it; but I know also that you do not esteem it enough. It was the wonder of angels that God should condescend to die; it will be the wonder of all wonders, the unceasing wonder of eternity, that God should become man to die. Oh! when we think that Christ was Creator of the world, and that on his all-sustaining shoulders did hang the universe, we cannot wonder that his death is mighty to redeem, and that his blood should cleanse from sin. Come hither saints and sinners; gather in and crowd around the cross, and see this man, overcome with weakness, fainting, groaning, bleeding, and dying. This man is also “God over all, blessed for ever,” Is there not power to save? Is there not efficacy in blood like that? Can you imagine any stretch of sin which shall out-measure the power of divinity—any height of iniquity that shall overtop the topless steeps of the divine? Can I conceive a depth of sin that shall be deeper than the infinite? or a breadth of iniquity that shall be broader than the Godhead? Because he is divine, he is “able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him.” Divinity appointed, spotless, and divine, his blood is the blood whereby ye may escape the anger and the wrath of God.

4. Once more; *the blood* of which we speak today, is blood *once shed* for many for the remission of sin. The paschal lamb was killed every year; but now Christ hath appeared to take away sin by the offering up of himself and there is now no more mention of sin, for Christ once for all hath put away sin, by the offering of himself. The Jew had the lamb every morning and every evening, for there was a continual mention of sin; the blood of the lamb could not take it away. The lamb availed for to-day, but there was the sin of to-morrow, what was to be done with that? Why, a fresh victim must bleed. But oh, my hearer, our greatest joy is, that the blood of Jesus has been once shed, and

he has said, "It is finished." There is no more need of the blood of bulls or of goats, or of any other sacrifice; that one sacrifice hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Trembling sinner! come to the cross again; thy sins are heavy, and many; but the atonement for them is completed by the death of Christ. Look then to Jesus, and remember that Christ needs nothing to supplement his blood. The road between God and man is finished and open; the robe to cover thy nakedness is complete, without a rag of thine; the bath in which thou art to be washed is full, full to the brim, and needs nothing to be added thereunto. "It is finished!" Let that ring in thy ears. There is nothing now that can hinder thy being saved, if God hath made thee willing now to believe in Jesus Christ. He is a complete Saviour, full of grace for an empty sinner.

5. And yet I must add one more thought, and then leave this point. The blood of Jesus Christ is blood that hath been accepted. Christ died—he was buried; but neither heaven nor earth could tell whether God had accepted the ransom. There was wanted God's seal upon the great Magna Charta of man's salvation, and that seal was put, my hearer, in that hour when God summoned the angel, and bade him descend from heaven and roll away the stone. Christ was put in durance vile in the prison house of the grave, as a hostage for his people. Until God had signed the warrant for acquittal of all his people, Christ must abide in the bonds of death. He did not attempt to break his prison; he did not come out illegally, by wrenching down the bars of his dungeon; he waited: he wrapt up the napkin, folding it by itself: he laid the grave-clothes in a separate place; he waited, waited patiently; and at last down from the skies, like the flash of a meteor, the angel descended, touched the stone and rolled it away; and when Christ came out, rising from the dead in the glory of his Father's power, then was the seal put upon the great charta of our redemption. The blood was accepted, and sin was forgiven. And now, soul, it is not possible for God to reject thee, if thou comest this day to him, pleading the blood of Christ. God cannot—and here we speak with reverence too—the everlasting God cannot reject a sinner who pleads the blood of Christ: for if he did so, it were to deny himself, and to contradict all his former acts. *He has* accepted blood, and *he will* accept it; he never can revoke that divine acceptance of the resurrection; and if thou goest to God, my hearer, pleading simply and only the blood of him that did hang upon the tree, God must un-God himself before he can reject thee, or reject that blood.

And yet I fear that I have not been able to make you think of the blood of Christ. I beseech you, then, just for a moment try to picture to yourself Christ on the cross. Let your imagination figure the motley crew assembled round about that little hill of Calvary. Lift now your eyes, and see the three crosses put upon that rising knoll. See in the centre the thorn-crowned brow of Christ. Do you see the hands that have always been full of blessing nailed fast to the accursed wood! See you his dear face, more marred than that of any other man? Do you see it now, as his head bows upon his bosom in the extreme agonies of death? He was a real man, remember. It was a real cross. Do not think of these things as figments, and fancies, and romances. There was such a being, and he died as I describe it. Let your imagination picture him, and then sit still a moment and think over this thought: "The blood of that man, whom now I behold dying in agony, must be my redemption; and if I would be saved, I must put my only trust in what he suffered for me, when he himself did 'bear our sins in his own body on the tree.'" If God the Holy Spirit should help you, you will then be in a right state to proceed to the second point.

II. THE EFFICACY OF THIS BLOOD. "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

1. The blood of Christ hath such a divine power to save, that *nothing but it can ever save the soul*. If some foolish Israelite had despised the command of God, and had said, "I will sprinkle

something else upon the doorposts," or, "I will adorn the lintel with jewels of gold and silver," he must have perished; nothing could save his household but the sprinkled blood. And now let us all remember, that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ," for "there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." My works, my prayers, my tears, cannot save me; *the blood*, the blood alone, has power to redeem. Sacraments, however well they may be attended to, cannot save me. Nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, can redeem me from the guilt of sin. Though I should give rivers of oil, and ten thousand of the fat of fed beasts; yea, though I should give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul, all would be useless. Nothing but the blood of Jesus has in it the slightest saving-power. Oh! you that are trusting in your infant baptism, your confirmation, and your Lord's Supper, you are trusting in a lie. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can save. I care not how right the ordinance, how true the form, how scriptural the practice, it is all a vanity to you if you rely in it. God forbid I should say a word against ordinances, or against holy things; but keep them in their places. If you make them the basis of your soul's salvation, they are lighter than a shadow, and when you need them most you shall find them fail you. There is not, I repeat it again, the slightest atom of saving-power anywhere but in the blood of Jesus. That blood has the only power to save, and aught else that you rely upon shall be a refuge of lies. This is the rock, and this is the work that is perfect; but all other things are day dreams; they must be swept away in the day when God shall come to try our work of what sort it is. THE BLOOD stands out in solitary majesty, the only rock of our salvation.

2. This blood is not simply the only thing that can save, but *it must save alone*. Put anything with the blood of Christ, and you are lost; trust to anything else with this and you perish. "It is true," says one, that the Sacrament cannot save me, but I will trust in that, and in Christ too." You are a lost man, then. So jealous is Christ of his honour, that anything you put with him, however good it is, becomes, from the fact of your putting it with him, an accursed thing. And what is it that thou wouldst put with Christ? Thy good works? What! wilt thou yoke a reptile with an angel—yoke thyself to the chariot of salvation with Christ? What are thy good works? Thy righteousnesses are "as filthy rags;" and shall filthy rags be joined to the spotless celestial righteousness of Christ? It must not, and it shall not be. Rely on Jesus only, and thou canst not perish; but rely on anything with him, and thou art as surely damned as if thou shouldst rely upon thy sins. Jesus only—Jesus only—Jesus only—this is the rock of our salvation.

And here let me stop, and combat a few forms and shapes which our self-righteousness always takes. "Oh," says one, "I could trust in Christ *if I felt my sins more*." Sir, that is a damning error. Is thy repentance, thy sense of sin, to be a part-Saviour? Sinner! *the blood* is to save thee, not thy tears, Christ's death, not thy repentance. Thou art bidden this day to trust in Christ; not in thy feelings, not in thy pangs on account of sin. Many a man has been brought into great soul distress, because he has looked more at his repentance than at the obedience of Christ—

"Could thy tears for ever flow,
 Could thy zeal no respite know;
 All for sin could not atone,
 Christ must save and *Christ alone*."

"Nay," says another, "but I feel that I do not value the blood of Christ as I ought, and therefore I am afraid to believe." My friend, that is another insidious form of the same error. God does not say, "When I see your estimate of the blood of Christ, I will pass over you; no, but when I see *the*

blood.” It is not your estimate of that blood, it is the blood that saves you. As I said before, that magnificent, solitary *blood*, must be alone.

“Nay,” says another, “but if I had more faith then I should have hope.” That, too, is a very deadly shape of the same evil. You are not to be saved by the efficacy of your faith, but by the efficacy of the blood of Christ. It is not your believing, it is Christ’s dying. I bid you believe, but I bid you not to look to your believing as the ground of your salvation. No man will go to heaven if he trusts to his own faith; you may as well trust to your own good works as trust to your faith. Your faith must deal with Christ not with itself. The world hangs on nothing; but faith cannot hang upon itself, it must hang on Christ. Sometimes, when my faith is vigorous, I catch myself doing this. There is joy flowing into my heart, and after awhile I begin to find that my joy suddenly departs. I ask the causes, and I find that the joy came because I was thinking of *Christ*; but when I begin to think about *my joy*, then my joy fled. You must not think of your faith but of Christ. Faith comes from meditation upon Christ. Turn, then, your eye, not upon faith but upon Jesus. It is not your hold of Christ that saves you; it is his hold of you. It is not the efficacy of your believing in him; it is the efficacy of his blood applied to you through the Spirit.

I do not know how sufficiently to follow Satan in all his windings into the human heart, but this, I know, he is always strying to keep back this great truth—the blood, and the blood alone has power to save. “Oh,” says another, “if I had such-and-such an experience then I could trust.” Friend, it is not thine experience, it is the blood. God did not say, “When I see your experience,” but “When I see *the blood of Christ.*” “Nay,” says one, “but if I had such-and-such graces, I could hope.” Nay, but he did not say, “When I see your graces,” but “When I see *the blood.*” Get grace, get as much as you can of faith, and love, and hope, but oh, do not put them where Christ’s blood ought to be. The only pillar of your hope must be the Cross, and aught else that you put to buttress up the cross of Christ is obnoxious to God, and ceases to have any virtue in it, because it is an anti-Christ. The blood of Christ, then alone, saves; but anything with it, and it does not save.

3. Yet again we may say of the blood of Christ, *it is all-sufficient*. There is no case which the blood of Christ cannot met; there is no sin which it cannot wash away. There is no multiplicity of sin which it cannot cleanse, no aggravation of guilt which it cannot remove. Ye may be double-dyed like scarlet, ye may have lain in the lye of your sins these seventy years, but the blood of Christ can take out the stain. You may have blasphemed him almost as many times as you have breathed, you may have rejected him as often as you have heard his name; you may have broken his Sabbath, you may have denied his existence, you may have doubted his Godhead, you may have persecuted his servants, you may have trampled on his blood; but all this the blood can wash away. You may have committed whoredoms without number, nay, murder itself may have defiled your hands, but this fountain filled with blood can wash all the stains away. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin. There is no sort of a man, there is no abortion of mankind, no demon in human shape that this blood cannot wash. Hell may have sought to make a paragon of iniquity, it may have striven to put sin, and sin, and sin together, till it has made a monster in the shape of man, a monster abhorred of mankind, but the blood of Christ can transform that monster. Magdalen’s seven devils it can cast out, the madness of the demoniac it can ease, the deep-seated leprosy it can cure, the wound of the maimed, yea, the lost limb it can restore. There is no spiritual disease which the great Physician cannot heal. This is the great Catholicon, the medicine for all diseases. No case can exceed its virtue, be it never so black or vile; all-sufficient, all-sufficient blood.

4. But go further. The blood of Christ saves *surely*. Many people say, "Well, I hope I shall be saved through the blood of Christ;" and perhaps, says one here, who is believing in Christ, "Well, I hope it will save." My dear friend, that is a slur upon the honour of God. If any man gives you a promise, and you say, "Well, I hope he will fulfil it;" is it not implied that you have at least some small doubt as to whether he will or not. Now, I do not hope that the blood of Christ will wash away my sin. I know it is washed away by his blood; and that is true faith which does not hope about Christ's blood, but says, "I know it is so; that blood does cleanse. The moment it was applied to my conscience it did cleanse, and it does cleanse still." The Israelite, if he was true to his faith, did not go inside, and say, "I hope the destroying angel will pass by me;" but he said, "I know he will; I know God cannot smite me; I know he will not. There is the blood-mark there, I am secure beyond a doubt; there is not the shadow of a risk of my perishing. I am, I must be saved." And so I preach a sure gospel this morning: "Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life." "I give unto my sheep eternal life," said he, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." O, sinner, I have not the shadow of a doubt as to whether Christ will save you if you trust in his blood. O no, I know he will. I am certain his blood can save; and I beg you, in Christ's name, believe the same; believe that that blood is *sure* to cleanse, not only that it *may* cleanse, but that it *must* cleanse, "whereby we *must* be saved," says the Scripture. If we have that blood upon us we must be saved, or else we are to suppose a God unfaithful and a God unkind; in fact, a God transformed from everything that is God-like into everything that is base.

5. And yet again, he that hath this blood sprinkled upon him is saved *completely*. Not the hair of the head of an Israelite was disturbed by the destroying angel. They were completely saved; so he that believeth in the blood is saved from all things. I like the old translation of the chapter in the Romans. There was a martyr once summoned before Bonner; and after he had expressed his faith in Christ, Bonner said "You are a heretic and will be damned." "Nay" said he, quoting the old version, "There is therefore now no damnation to them that believe in Christ Jesus." And that brings a sweet thought before us; there is no damnation to the man who has the blood of Christ upon him; he cannot be condemned of God anyhow. It were impossible. *There is no such a thing*; there can be no such thing. There is no damnation. He cannot be damned; for there is no damnation to him that is in Christ Jesus. Let the blood be applied to the lintel, and to the door-post, there is no destruction. There is a destroying angel for Egypt, but there is none for Israel. There is a hell for the wicked, but none for the righteous. And if there is none, they cannot be put there. If there is no damnation they cannot suffer it. Christ saves completely; every sin is washed, every blessing ensured, perfection is provided, and glory everlasting *is* the sure result.

I think then, I have dwelt sufficiently long upon the efficacy of his blood; but no tongue of seraph can ever speak its worth. I must go home to my chamber, and weep because I am powerless to tell this story, and yet I have laboured to tell it simply, so that all can understand; and I pray, therefore, that God the Spirit may lead some of you to put your trust simply, wholly, and entirely, on the blood of Jesus Christ.

III. This brings us to the third point, upon which I must be very brief, and the third point is—THE ONE CONDITION. What says one "Do you preach a conditional salvation?" Yes I do, there is the one condition "Where *I see* the blood I will pass over you." What a blessed condition! it does not say, when you see the blood, but when *I see* it. Thine eye of faith may be so dim, that thou canst not see the blood of Christ. Ay, but God's eye is not dim: He can see it, yea he must see it; for

Christ in heaven is always presenting his blood before his Father's face. The Israelite could not see the blood; he was inside the house; he could not see what was on the lintel and the doorpost; but God could see it; and this is the only condition of the sinner's salvation—God's seeing the blood; not your seeing it. O how safe, then, is every one that trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not his faith that is the condition, not his assurance; it is the simple fact, that Calvary is set perpetually before the eyes of God in a risen and ascended Saviour. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Fall on your knees then in prayer, ye doubting souls, and let this be your plea:—"Lord, have mercy upon me for the blood's sake. *I* cannot see it as I could desire, but Lord *thou* seest it, and thou hast said, 'When I see it, I will pass over you.' Lord, thou seest it this day, pass over my sin, and forgive me for its dear sake alone."

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT IS THE LESSON. The lesson of the text is to the Christian this. Christian, take care that thou dost always remember, that nothing but the blood of Christ can save thee. I preach to myself to-day what I preach to you. I often find myself like this:—I have been praying that the Holy Spirit might rest in my heart and cleanse out an evil passion, and presently I find myself full of doubts and fears, and when I ask the reason, I find it is this:—I have been looking to the Spirit's work until I put the Spirit's work where Christ's work ought to be. Now, it is a sin to put your own works where Christ's should be; but it is just as much a sin to put the Holy Spirit's work there. You must never make the Spirit of God an anti-Christ, and you virtually do that when you put the Spirit's work as the groundwork of your faith. Do you not often hear Christian men say, "I cannot believe in Christ to-day as I could yesterday, for yesterday I felt such sweet and blessed enjoyments." Now, what is that but putting your frames and feelings where Christ ought to be. Remember, Christ's blood is no more able to save you in a good frame than in a bad frame. Christ's blood must be your trust, as much when you are full of joy as when you are full of doubt. And here it is that your happiness will be in danger, by beginning to put your good frames and good feelings in the room of the blood of Christ. O, brethren, if we could always live with a single eye fixed on the Cross, we should always be happy; but when we get a little peace, and a little joy, we begin to prize the joy and peace so much, that we forget the source whence they come. As Mr. Brooks says, "A husband that loves his wife will, perhaps, often give her jewels and rings; but suppose she should sit down and begin to think of her jewels and rings so much that she should forget her husband, it would be a kind husband's business to take them away from her so that she might fix her affections entirely on him." And it is so with us. Jesus gives us jewels of faith and love, and we get trusting to them, and he takes them away in order that we may come again as guilty, helpless sinners, and put our trust in Christ. To quote a verse I often repeat—I believe the spirit of a Christian should be, from his first hour to his last, the spirit of these two lines:—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

That is the lesson to the saint.

But another minute; there is a lesson here to the sinner. Poor, trembling, guilty self-condemned sinner, I have a word from the Lord for thee. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us," that is you and me, "cleanseth *us* from all sin." That "*us*" includes you, if now you are feeling your need of a Saviour. Now that blood is able to save you, and you are bidden simply to trust that blood, and you shall be saved. But I hear you say, "Sir," you said, "If I feel my need. Now I feel that I do not feel, I only wish I did feel my need enough." Well do not bring your feelings then, but trust only in the blood. If you can rely simply on the blood of Christ, whatever your feelings may be, or may not

be, that blood is able to save. But you are saying, "How am I to be saved? What must I do?" Well there is nothing that you can do. You must leave off doing altogether, in order to be saved. There must be a denial of all your doings. You must get Christ first, and then you may do as much as you like. But you must not trust in your doings. Your business is now to lift up your heart in prayer like this:—"Lord, thou hast shown me something of myself, show me something of my Saviour." See the Saviour hanging on the cross, turn your eye to him, and say, "Lord, I trust thee I have nothing else to trust to, but I rely on thee; sink or swim, my Saviour, I trust thee." And as surely sinner, as thou canst put thy trust in Christ, thou art as safe as an apostle or prophet. Not death nor hell can slay that man whose firm reliance is at the foot of the cross. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth shall be saved, be his sins never so many; he that believeth not shall be damned, be his sins never so few, and be his virtues never so many. Trust in Jesus now! Sinner, trust in Jesus only.

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they."

Love

A Sermon

(No. 229)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 19th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“We love him, because he first loved us.”—1 John 4:19.

DURING the last two Sabbath days I have been preaching the gospel to the unconverted. I have earnestly exhorted the very chief of sinners to look to Jesus Christ, and have assured them that as a preparation for coming to Christ, they need no good works, or good dispositions, but that they may come, just as they are, to the foot of the cross, and receive the pardoning blood and all-sufficient merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought has since occurred to me, that some who were ignorant of the gospel might, perhaps, put this query:—Is this likely to promote morality? If the gospel be a proclamation of pardon to the very chief of sinners, will not this be a license to sin? In what respects can the gospel be said to be a gospel according to holiness? How will such preaching operate? Will it make men better? Will they be more attentive to the laws which relate to man and man? Will they be more obedient to the statutes which relate to man and God? I thought, therefore, that we would advance a step further, and endeavour to show, this morning, how the proclamation of the gospel of God, though in the commencement it addresses itself to men who are utterly destitute of any good, is, nevertheless, designed to lead these very men to the noblest heights of virtue, yea, to ultimate perfection in holiness. The text tells us, that the effect of the gospel received in the heart is, that it compels and constrains such a heart to love God. “We love him, because he first loved us.” When the gospel comes to us it does not find us loving God, it does not expect anything of us, but coming with the divine application of the Holy Ghost, it simply assures us that God loves us, be we never so deeply immersed in sin; and then, the after effect of this proclamation of love is, that “we love him because he first loved us.”

Can you imagine a being placed halfway between this world and heaven? Can you conceive of him as having such enlarged capacities that he could easily discern what was done in heaven, and what was done on earth? I can conceive that, before the Fall, if there had been such a being, he would have been struck with the singular harmony which existed between God’s great world, called heaven, and the little world, the earth. Whenever the chimes of heaven rang, the great note of those massive bells was *love*; and when the little bells of earth were sounded, the harmonies of this narrow sphere, rang out their note, it was just the same—*love*. When the bright spirits gathered around the great throne of God in heaven to magnify the Lord, at the same time, there was to be seen the world, clad in its priestly garments, offering its sacrifice of purest praise. When the cherubim and seraphim did continually cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies,” there was heard a note, feebler, perhaps, but yet as sweetly musical, coming up from paradise, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies.” There was no jar, no discord; the thunder peals of heaven’s melodies were exactly in accord with the whispers of earth’s harmonies. There was “glory to God in the highest,” and on earth there was glory too; the heart of man was as the heart of God; God loved man, and man loved God. But imagine that same great Spirit to be still standing between the heavens and the earth, how sad must

he be, when he hears the jarring discord, and feels it grate upon the ear! The Lord saith, "I am reconciled to thee, I have put away thy sin;" but what is the answer of this earth? The answer of the world is, "Man is at enmity with God: God may be reconciled, but man is not. The mass of men are still enemies to God by wicked works." When the angels praise God, if they list to the sounds that are to be heard on earth, they hear the tramp of cruel war; they hear the bacchanalian shout and the song of the lascivious, and what a discord is this in the great harmony of the spheres? The fact is this,—the world was originally one great string in the harp of the universe, and when the Almighty swept that harp with his gracious fingers there was nothing to be heard but praise; now that string is snapped, and where it has been reset by grace, still it is not wholly restored to its perfect tune, and the note that cometh from it hath but little of sweetness, and very much of discord. But, bright Spirit, retain thy place, and live on. The day is hastening with glowing wheels, and the axle thereof is hot with speed. The day is coming, when this world shall be a paradise again. Jesus Christ, who came the first time to bleed and suffer, that he might wash the world from its iniquity, is coming a second time to reign and conquer, that he may clothe the earth with glory; and the day shall arrive, when thou, O Spirit, shall hear again the everlasting harmony. Once more the bells of earth shall be attuned to the melodies of heaven; once more shall the eternal chorus find that no singer is absent, but that the music is complete.

But how is this to be? How is the world to be brought back? How is it to be restored? We answer, the reason why there was this original harmony between earth and heaven was, because there was *love* between them twain, and our great reason for hoping that there shall be at last re-established an undiscordant harmony between heaven and earth is simply this, that God hath already manifested his love towards us, and that in return, hearts touched by his grace do even now love him; and when they shall be multiplied, and love re-established, then shall the harmony be complete.

Having thus introduced my text, I must now plunge into it. We shall notice the *parentage*, the *nourishment*, and the *walk of love*; and shall exhort all believers here present, to love God, because he hath first loved them.

1. In the first place,

THE PARENTAGE OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD

"What though the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Java's isle;
Where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile."

Where God is most resplendent in his works, and most lavish in his gifts, there man has been the vilest and God is the most forgotten.

Others have taught, if not exactly in doctrine, yet their doctrine necessarily leads to it, that human nature may of itself attain unto love to God. Our simple reply is, we have never met with such an instance. We have curiously questioned the people of God, and we believe that others have questioned them in every age, but we have never had but one answer to this question, "Why hast thou loved God?" The only answer has been, "Because he first loved me." I have heard men preach about free-will, but I never yet heard of a Christian who exalted free-will in his own experience. I have heard men say, that men of their own free-will may turn to God, believe, repent, and love, but I have heard the same persons, when talking of their own experience, say, that they did not so turn to God, but that Jesus sought them when they were strangers, wandering from the fold of God. The whole matter may look specious enough, when preached, but when felt it is found to be a phantom.

It may *seem* right enough for a man to tell his fellow that his own free-will may save him; but when he comes to close dealing with his own conscience, he himself, however wild in his doctrine, is compelled to say, "Oh! yes, I do love Jesus, because he first loved me." I have wondered at a Wesleyan brother, who has sometimes railed against this doctrine in the pulpit, and then has given out this very hymn, and all the members of the church have joined in singing it most heartily, while at the same time they were tolling the death-knell of their own peculiar tenets; for if that hymn be true Arminianism must be false. If it be the certain fact, that the only reason for our loving God is that his love has been shed abroad in our hearts, then it cannot be true anyhow, that man ever did or ever will love God, until first of all God has manifested his love towards him.

But without disputing any longer, do we not all admit that our love to God is the sweet offspring of God's love to us? Ah! beloved, cold admiration every man may have; but the warmth of love can only be kindled by the fires of God's Spirit. Let each Christian speak for himself, we shall all hold this great and cardinal truth, that the reason of our love to God is, the sweet influence of his grace. Sometimes I wonder that such as we should have been brought to love God at all. Is our love so precious that God should court our love, dressed in the crimson robes of a dying Redeemer? If we had loved God, it would have been no more than he deserved. But when we rebelled, and yet he sought our love, it was surprising indeed. It was a wonder when he disrobed himself of all his splendours, and came down and wrapt himself in a mantle of clay; but methinks the wonder is excelled yet, for after he had died for us, still we did not love him; we rebelled against him; we rejected the proclamation of the gospel; we resisted his Spirit; but he said, I *will* have their hearts; and he followed us day after day, hour after hour. Sometimes he laid us low, and he said, "Surely they will love me if I restore them!" At another time he filled us with corn and with wine, and he said "Surely they will love me now," but we still revolted, still rebelled. At last he said, "I will strive no longer, I am Almighty, and I will not have it that a human heart is stronger than I am. I turn the will of man as the rivers of water are turned," and lo! he put forth his strength, and in an instant the current changed, and we loved him, because we then could see the love of God, in that he sent his Son to be our Redeemer. But we must confess, beloved, going back to the truth with which we started, that never should we have had any love towards God, unless that love had been sown in us by the sweet seed of his love to us. If there be any one here that hath a love to Christ, let him differ from this doctrine here, but let him know that he shall not differ hereafter; for in heaven they all sing, praise to free grace. They all sing, "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb."

II. Love, then, has for its parent the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. But after it is divinely born in our heart it must be divinely

NOURISHED

The first thing, then, that our love feeds upon, when it is but an infant, is a sense of favours received. Ask a young Christian why he loves Christ, and he will tell you, I love Christ because he has bought me with his blood! Why do you love God the Father? I love God the Father because he gave his Son for me. And why do you love God the Spirit? I love him because he has renewed my heart. That is to say we love God for what he has given to us. Our first love feeds just on the simple food of a grateful recollection of mercies received. And mark, however much we grow in grace this will always constitute a great part of the food of our love.

But when the Christian grows older and has more grace, he loves Christ for another reason. He loves Christ because he feels Christ deserves to be loved. I trust I can say, I have in my heart now

a love to God, These men did not merely love Christ because of what he had done for them; but you will find in their sonnets and in their letters—that their motive of love was, that he had communed with them, he had showed them his hands and his side; they had walked with him in the villages; they had lain with him on the beds of spices; they had entered into the mystic circle of communion; and they felt that they loved Christ, because he was all over glorious, and was so divinely fair, that if all nations could behold him, sure they must be constrained to love him too.

This, then, is the food of love; but when love grows rich—and it does sometimes—the most loving heart grows cold towards Christ. Do you know that the only food that ever suits sick love, is the food on which it fed at first. I have heard say by the physicians, that if a man be sick there is no place so well adapted for him as the place where he was born; and if love grow sick and cold, there is no place so fit for it to go to as the place where it was born, namely, the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Where was love born? Was she born in the midst of romantic scenery, and was she nursed with wondrous contemplations upon the lap of beauty? Ah! no. Was she born on the steeps of Sinai, when God came from Sinai and the holy one from mount Paran, and melted the mountains with the touch of his foot, and made the rocks flow down like wax before his terrible presence? Ah! no. Was love born on Tabor, when the Saviour was transfigured, and his garment became whiter than wool, whiter than any fuller could make it? Ah! no; darkness rushed o'er the sight of those that looked upon him then, and they fell asleep, for the glory overpowered them. Let me tell you where love was born. Love was born in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus sweat great drops of blood, it was nurtured in Pilate's hall, where Jesus bared his back to the ploughing of the lash, and gave his body to be spit upon and scourged. Love was nurtured at the cross, amid the groans of an expiring God, beneath the droppings of his blood—it was there that love was nurtured. Bear me witness, children of God. Where did your love spring from, but from the foot of the cross? Did you ever see that sweet flower growing anywhere but at the foot of Calvary? No; it was when ye saw "love divine, all loves excelling," outdoing its own self; it was when you saw love in bondage to itself, dying by its own stroke, laying down its life, though it had power to retain it and to take it up again; it was there your love was born; and if you wish your love, when it is sick, to be recovered, take it to some of those sweet places; make it sit in the shade of the olive trees, and make it stand on the pavement and gaze, while the blood is still gushing down. Take it to the cross, and bid it look and see afresh the bleeding lamb; and surely this shall make thy love spring from a dwarf into a giant, and this shall fan it from a spark into a flame.

And then, when thy love is thus recruited, let me bid thee give thy love full exercise; for it shall grow thereby. You say, "Where shall I exercise the contemplation of my love, to make it grow?" Oh! Sacred Dove of love, stretch thy wings, and play the eagle now. Come! open wide thine eyes, and look full in the Sun's face, and soar upward, upward, upward, far above the heights of this world's creation, upwards, till thou art lost in eternity. Remember, that God loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Does not this strengthen thy love? Ah! what a bracing air is that air of eternity? When I fly into it for a moment, and think of the great doctrine of election—of

"That vast unmeasured love,
Which from the days of old,
Did all the chosen seed embrace,
like sheep within the fold."

It makes the tears run down one's cheeks to think that we should have an interest in that decree and council of the Almighty Three, when every one that should be blood-bought had its name

inscribed in God's eternal book. Come, soul, I bid thee now exercise thy wings a little, and see if this does not make thee love God. He thought of thee before thou hadst a being. When as yet the sun and the moon were not,—when the sun, the moon, and the stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup, when the old sea was not yet born, long ere this infant world lay in its swaddling bands of mist, then God had inscribed thy name upon the heart and upon the hands of Christ indelibly, to remain for ever. And does not this make thee love God? Is not this sweet exercise for thy love? For here it is my text comes in, giving, as it were, the last charge in this sweet battle of love, a charge that sweeps everything before it. “We love God, because he first loved us,” seeing that he loved us before time began, and when in eternity he dwelt alone.

And when thou hast soared backward into the past eternity, I have yet another flight for thee. Soar back through all thine own experience, and think of the way whereby the Lord thy God has led thee in the wilderness, and how he hath fed and clothed thee every day—how he hath borne with thine ill manners—how he hath put up with all thy murmurings, and all thy longings after the flesh-pots of Egypt—how he has opened the rock to supply thee, and fed thee with manna that came down from heaven. Think of how his grace has been sufficient for thee in all thy troubles—how his blood has been a pardon to thee in all thy sins—how his rod and his staff have comforted thee. And when thou hast flown over this sweet field of love, thou mayest fly further on, and remember that the oath, the covenant, the blood, have something more in them than the past, for though “he first loved us,” yet this doth not mean that he shall ever cease to, love, for he is Alpha and he shall be Omega, he is first, and he shall be *last*; and therefore bethink thee, when thou shalt pass through the valley of the shadow of death, thou needest fear no evil, for he is with thee. When thou shalt stand in the cold floods of Jordan, thou needest not fear, for death cannot separate thee from his love; and when thou shalt come into the mysteries of eternity thou needest not tremble, for “I am persuaded that neither principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And now, soul is not thy love refreshed? Does not this make thee love him? Doth not a flight over those illimitable plains of the ether of love, inflame thy heart, and compel thee to delight thyself in the Lord thy God? Here is the food of love. “We love him, because he first loved us,” and because in that first love there is the pledge and promise that he will love us even to the end.

III. And now comes the third point, the

WALK OF LOVE

When we are on our knees in prayer, I fear that when we are praying for the church we do not mean all that we say. We are praying for *our* church, our section of it. Now, he that loves Christ, if he be a Baptist, he loves the doctrine of baptism, because he knows it to be Scriptural; but, at the same time wherever he sees the grace of God to be in any man's heart, he loves him because he is a part of the living church, and he does not withhold his heart, his hand, or his house from him, because he happens to differ on some one point. I pray that the church in these days may have a more loving spirit towards herself. We ought to delight in the advance of every denomination. Is the Church of England rousing from its sleep? Is she springing like a phoenix, from her ashes? God be with her, and God bless her! Is another denomination leading the van, and seeking by its ministers to entice the wanderer into the house of God? God be with it! Is the Primitive Methodist labouring in the hedge and ditch, toiling for his Master? God help Him! Is the Calvinist seeking to uphold

Christ crucified in all his splendours? God be with him! And does another man with far less knowledge preach much error, but still hold that “by grace are ye saved through faith,” then God bless him, and may success be with him evermore. If ye loved Christ better ye would love *all* Christ’s church, and all Christ’s people.

Do you not know that Christ hath now a mouth on earth, and hath left a hand on earth and a foot on earth still, and that if ye would prove your love to him, ye would not think that ye cannot feed him—ye need not imagine that ye cannot fill his hand, or that ye cannot wash his feet? Ye can do all this to-day. He has left his poor and afflicted people, and their mouths are hungry, for they need bread, and their tongue is parched for they need water. You meet them; they come to you; they are destitute and afflicted. Do ye refuse them? Do you know who it was ye denied at your door? “Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me.” In rejecting the petition of the poor when you might have helped them, you rejected Christ. Christ was virtually the man to whom you parsimoniously refused the needed alms, and your Saviour was thus rejected at the door of one for whom he himself had died. Do you want to feed Christ? Open your eyes, then, and you shall see him everywhere; in our back streets, in our lanes, in our alleys, in all our churches, connected with every branch of Christ’s people, ye shall find the poor and the afflicted. If ye want feed Christ, feed *them*. But ye say that ye are willing to wash Christ’s feet Ah! well, and ye may do it. Has he no fallen children? Are there no brethren who have sinned, and who are thus defiled? If Christ’s feet were foul, ye say ye would wash them; then if a Christian man has stepped aside, seek to restore him, and lead him once more in the way of righteousness. And do you want to fill Christ’s hands with your liberality? His Church is the treasure-house of his alms, and the hand of his church is outstretched for help, for she always needs it. She has a work to do which must be accomplished. She is straitened because your help is withheld from her; pour your gifts into her treasury, for all that ye can give unto her is given to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, to stimulate your love, let me remind you that Christ Jesus had two trials of his love, which he endured with firmness, but which are often too much for us. When Christ was high, and glorious, I marvel that he loved *us*. I have known many a man who loved his friend when he was in the same low estate; but he has risen, and he has disdained to know the man at whose table he had fed. A lofty elevation tries the love which we bear to those who are inferior to us in rank. Now, Christ Jesus, the Lord of heaven and the King of angels, condescended to notice us before he came on earth, and always called us brethren: and since he has ascended up to heaven, and has re-assumed the diadem. and once more sits down at the right hand of God, he never has forgotten us. His high estate has never made him slight a disciple. When he rode into Jerusalem in triumph, we do not read that he disdained to confess that the humble fishermen were his followers. And “now, though he reigns exalted high, his love is still as great;” still he calls us brethren, friends; still he recognizes the kinship of the one blood. And yet, strange to say, we have known many Christians who have forgotten much of their love to Christ when they have risen in the world. “Ah!” said a woman, who had been wont to do much for Christ in poverty, and who had had a great sum left her, “I cannot do as much as I used to do.” “But how is that?” said one. Said she, “When I had a shilling purse I had a guinea heart, and now I have a guinea purse I have only a shilling heart.” It is a sad temptation to some men to get rich. They were content to go to the meeting-house and mix with the ignoble congregation, while they had but little; they have grown rich, there is a Turkey carpet in the drawing-room, they have arrangements now too splendid to permit them to invite the poor of the flock, as once they did, and Christ Jesus is not so fashionable as to allow them to introduce any

religious topic when they meet with their new friends. Besides this, they say they are now obliged to pay this visit and that visit, and they must spend so much time upon attire, and in maintaining their station and respectability, they cannot find time to pray as they did. The house of God has to be neglected for the party, and Christ has less of their heart than ever he had. "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" And hast thou risen so high that thou art ashamed of Christ? and art thou grown so rich, that Christ in his poverty is despised? Alas! poor wealth! alas! base wealth! vile wealth! 'Twere well for thee if it should be all swept away, if a descent to poverty should be a restoration to the ardency of thine affection.

But once again: what a trial of love was that, when Christ began to suffer for us! There are many men, I doubt not, who are true believers, and love their Saviour, who would tremble to come to the test of suffering. Imagine yourself my brother, taken to-day into some dark dungeon of the Inquisition; conceive that all the horrors of the dark ages are revived, you are taken down a long dark staircase, and hurried you know not whither, at last you come to a place, far deep in the bowels of the earth, and round about you see hanging on the walls the pincers, the instruments of torture of all kinds and shapes. There are two inquisitors there who say to you, "Are you prepared to renounce your heretical faith, and to return to the bosom of the church?" I conceive my brethren and sisters, that you would have strength of mind and grace enough to say, "I am not prepared to deny my Saviour." But when the pincers began to tear the flesh, when the hot coals began to scorch, when the rack began to dislocate the bones; when all the instruments of torture were wreaking their hellish vengeance, unless the supernatural hand of God should be mightily upon you, I am sure that in your weakness you would deny your Master, and in the hour of your peril would forsake the Lord that bought you. True, the love of Christ in the heart, when sustained by his grace, is strong enough to bear us through; but I am afraid that with many of us here present, if we had no more love than we have now, we should come out from the inquisition miserable apostates from the faith. But now, remember Christ. He was exposed to tortures, which were really more tremendous, far. There is no engine of Romish cruelty that can equal that dreadful torture which forced a sweat of blood from every pore. Christ was scourged and he was crucified; but there were other woes unseen by us, which were the soul of his agonies. Now, if Christ in the hour of sore trial had said, "I disown my disciples, I will not die," he might have come down from the cross; and who could accuse him of evil? He owed us nothing; we could do nothing for him. Poor worms would be all that he would disown. But our Master, even when the blood-sweat covered him as with a mantle of gore, never thought of disowning us—NEVER. "My Father," said he once, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But there was always the "If it be possible." If it be possible to save without it, let the cup pass; but if not thy will be done. You never hear him say in Pilate's hall one word that would let you imagine that he was sorry he had undertaken so costly a sacrifice for us; and when his hands are pierced, and when he is parched with fever, and his tongue is dried up like a potsherd, and his whole body is dissolved into the dust of death, you never hear a groan or a shriek that looks like going back. It is the cry of one determined to go on, though he knows he must die on his onward march. It was love that could not be stayed by death, but overcame all the horrors of the grave.

Now, what say we to this? We who live in these gentler times, are we about to give up our Master, when we are tried and tempted for him? Young man in the workshop! it is your lot to be jeered at because you are a follower of the Saviour; and will you turn back from Christ because of a jeer? Young woman! you are laughed at because you profess the religion of Christ, shall a laugh dissolve the link of love that knits your heart to him, when all the roar of hell could not divert his

love from you. And you who are suffering because you maintain a religious principle, are you cast out from men; will you not bear that the house should be stripped, and that you shall eat the bread of poverty, rather than dishonour such a Lord? Will you not go forth from this place, by the help of God's Spirit, vowing and declaring that in life, come poverty, come wealth—in death, come pain, or come what may, you are and ever must be the Lord's; for this is written on your heart, "We love him, because he first loved us."

The Vanguard and Rereward of the Church

A Sermon

(No. 230)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 26th, 1858, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

“The Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.”—Isaiah 52:12.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST is continually represented under the figure of an army; yet its Captain is the Prince of Peace; its object is the establishment of peace, and its soldiers are men of a peaceful disposition. The spirit of war is at the extremely opposite point to the spirit of the gospel. Yet nevertheless, the church on earth has, and until the second advent must be, the church militant, the church armed, the church warring, the church conquering. And how is this? It is in the very order of things that so it must be. Truth could not be truth in this world if it were not a warring thing, and we should at once suspect that it were not true if error were friends with it. The spotless purity of truth must always be at war with the blackness of heresy and lies. I say again, it would cast a suspicion upon its own nature; we should feel at once that it was not true, if it were not an enmity with the false. And so at this present time, the church of Christ, being herself the only incarnation of truth left upon this world, must be at war with error of every kind of shape; or if she were not, we should at once conclude that she was not herself the church of the living God. It is but a rule of nature that holiness must be at enmity with sin. That would be but a mock purity which could lie side by side with iniquity and claim its kinship. “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?” Shall Christ and Belial walk together? Shall the holy be linked with the unholy? If it were so, beloved, we might then not only suspect that the church was not the holy, universal and apostolic church; we might not only suspect it, but we might beyond suspicion pronounce a verdict upon her, “Thou art no more Christ’s bride; thou art an antichrist, an apostate. Reprobate silver shall men call thee, because thou hast not learned to distinguish between the precious and the vile.” Thus, you see, if the church be a true church, and a holy church, she must be armed: there are so many untrue things and unholy things, that she must be perpetually with her sword in her hand, carrying on combat against them. And every child of God proveth by experience that this is the land of war. We are not yet come to the time when every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. The mountains do not bring peace to the people, nor the little hills righteousness. On the contrary, the children of God hear the sound of war; the shrill clarion is constantly sounding in their ears; they are compelled to carry with them the sword and the shield, and constantly to gird their armor on, for they are not yet come to the land of peace; they are in an enemy’s country, and every day will convince them that such is their position. Now, how comforting is this text to the believer who recognizes himself as a soldier, and the whole church as an army! The church has its van-guard: “Jehovah will go before you.” The church is also in danger behind; enemies may attack her in her hinder part, “and the God of Israel shall be her rereward.” So that the army is safe from enemies in front—and God alone knoweth their strength and it is also perfectly secure from any foes behind, however malicious and powerful they may be;

for Jehovah is in the van, and the covenant God of Israel is behind: therefore the whole army is safe.

I shall first consider this as it respects *the church of God*; and then, in the second place, I shall endeavour to consider it as it respects *us, as individual believers*. May God comfort our hearts while considering this precious truth!

I. First, consider THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD AS AN ARMY. Remember that part of the host have crossed the flood; a large part of the army are standing this day upon the hills of glory; having overcome and triumphed. As for the rear, it stretches far into the future; some portions are as yet uncreated; the last of God's elect are not perhaps yet in existence. The rear-guard will be brought up in that day when the last vessel of mercy is full to the brim of grace, the last prodigal is restored to his Father's house, and the last of Christ's redeemed ones redeemed by power, as they were of old redeemed by blood. Now, cast your eyes forward to the front of the great army of God's elect, and you see this great truth coming up with great brilliance before you: "*Jehovah shall go before you.*" Is not this true? Have you never heard of the eternal counsel and of the everlasting covenant? Did that not go before the church? Yea, my brethren, it went before manhood's existence, before the creation of this world that was to be the stage whereon the church should play its part, before the formation of the universe itself, when as yet all things that we now behold were unborn, when God lived alone in solitary majesty without a fellow, when there were no creatures. If there were such an eternity, an eternity filled with the Creator, and not one creature with him, even then it was, that God determined in his mind that he would form a people to himself who should show forth his praise; it was then that he settled how men should be redeemed; it was then the council of peace was held between the three divine persons, and it was determined that the Father should give the Son, that the Son should give himself, that the Holy Spirit should be the active agent to fetch out all the lost sheep, and restore them to the fold. Oh! think, beloved, of that great text which says, "His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting." Do not think that the gospel is a new thing; it is older than your hoary mountains, nay, it is older than the firstborn sons of light. Before that "beginning," when God created the heavens and the earth, there was another "beginning," for "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And assuredly, the Gospel was ever in the *Word*, for Jesus was set up front everlasting as the great head of the covenant of grace. Behold, then, the glorious Jehovah in the Trinity of his persons, treading the pathless depths of eternity, that a way for his elect might be prepared herein. He has gone before us.

Take another view of the case. Jehovah shall go before you. Has he not gone before his church in act and deed? Perilous has been the journey of the church from the day when first it left Paradise even until now. When the church left Paradise, I say, for I believe that Adam and Eve were in the church of God, for I believe that both of them were redeemed souls, chosen of God, and precious. I see God give the promise to them before they leave the garden, and they go out from the garden, *the church of God*. Since that time, what a path has the church had to tread, but how faithfully hat Jehovah led the way. We see the floods gather round about her, but even then she floats safely in the ark which Jehovah had provided for her beforehand, for the Lord had gone before her. I see the church going out from Ur of the Chaldees. It is but a little church, with the patriarch Abraham at its head. I see that little church dwelling in an enemy's country, moving to and fro; but I observe how the Lord is its constant leader—"When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes;

saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." I see the church afterwards going down to the land of the cruel Pharaohs. It was a black part of her pilgrimage, for she was going to the lash of the taskmaster and to the heat of the burning fiery furnace; but I see Joseph going down before, Jehovah's great representative; Joseph goeth down into Egypt, and he saith, "God sent me before you to provide a place for you in the time of famine." So sings the Psalmist, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham." But now the church has to come up out of Egypt, and God goes before her still; "But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." The Red Sea is before them; Jehovah goes in front and dries up the sea. The desert must then be trodden; Jehovah marches in front, and scatters manna with both his hands; he splits the rock, and sends out a living stream. For forty years the church wanders there; Jehovah is with them; the fiery cloud-pillar leads them all their journey through. And now they come to the banks of Jordan; they are about to enter into the promised land; Jehovah goes before them and the Jordan is driven back, and the floods are dry. They came into the country of the mighty ones, the sons of Anak, men that were of the race of giants; but Jehovah had gone before them; the hornet was sent and the pestilence, so that when they came they said it was a land that did eat up the inhabitants thereof, for God himself with the sword and the pestilence was mowing down their foes that they might be an easier victory. "And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents."

But why need I go through all the pages of the history of the church of God in the days of the old dispensation? Hath it not been true from the days of John the Baptist until now? Brethren, how can ye account for the glorious triumphs of the church if ye deny the fact that God has gone before her? I see the church emerge, as it were, from the bowels of Christ. Twelve fishermen—what are these to do? Do? Why they are to shake the world, to uproot old systems of paganism that have become venerable, and whose antiquity seems a guarantee that men will never renounce them. These men are to blot out the name of Jupiter; they are to cast Venus from her licentious throne; they are to pull down the temple of Delphos, scatter all the oracles, and disrobe the priests: these men are to overthrow a system and an empire of error that has stood for thousands of years—a system which has brought in to its help all the philosophy of learning and all the pomp of power;—these twelve fishermen are to do it. And they have done it, they have done it. The gods of the heathens are cast clown; they only remain among us as memorials of men's folly; but who bows down to Jupiter now? Where is the worshipper of Ashtaroth? Who calls Diana a divinity? The twelve fishermen have done it; they have erased from the world the old system of superstition; it seemed old as the eternal hills, yet have they dug up its foundations and scattered them to the winds. Could they have accomplished it unless Jehovah had been in the van and led the way? No, beloved, if ye read the history of the church, ye will be compelled to confess that whenever she went forward she could discern the footsteps of Jehovah leading the way. Our missionaries in these later times tell us that, when they went to the South Seas to preach the gospel, there was an evident

preparedness in the minds of the people for the reception of the truth, and I believe that at this time, if the church were true to herself, there are nations and people and tribes that are just in the condition of the ancient Canaanites: the hornet is among them making way for the Lord's army to win an easy conquest. But sure I am that never minister ascends the pulpit, if he be a true minister of Christ; never missionary crosses the sea, never Sunday school teacher goes to his work, but that Jehovah goes before him to help him if he goes in earnest prayer and constant faith. If I were a poet I think I have a subject that might suggest a grand epic poem—the march of the church through the world, with Jehovah in her fore front. See, when first she comes forth, “the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed.” Alas, poor church, what is now thy fate? But I hear a voice ahead. What is it? It is a laugh. Who laughs? Why the leader of the army laughs. “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them. The Lord shall have them in derision.” And shall we that are behind be mourning? Shall the church tremble? Let her call to mind the days of old, and comfort herself, that the Breaker has gone up before her, and the King at the head of her. But the enemy approaches. They bring out the rack, the bloody sword, the burning faggot. The march of the church lies through the flames, the floods must be forded, torments must be endured. Did the church ever stop a moment in its march for all the martyrdoms that fell upon her like the drops of a fiery shower? Never, never did the church seem to march on with feet so ready, never were her steps so firm as when she dipped her foot each time in blood, and every moment passed through the fire. It was the marvel of those days that men were better Christians then, and more willing to make a profession of Christ than they are even now. And whereas this seems to be the day of cravens, the time of persecution was the age of heroes, the time of the great and the bold. And why? Because God had gone beforehand with his church, and provided stores of grace for stores of trouble, shelter and mercy for tempests and persecution, abundance of strength for a superfluity of trial. Happy is the church because God has gone before her. Whether it were over the tops of the mountains, where her pastors fell frozen by cold, or whether it were in the depths of the dungeon where her confessors expired upon the rack, whether it were in the flame or at the block, everywhere God went before his church, and she came forth triumphant because her great vanguard had cleared the way.

And now, beloved, we have come to the sweet part of the text, which saith, “And the God of Israel shall be the rereward.” The original Hebrew is, “God of Israel shall gather you up.” Armies in the time of war diminish by reason of stragglers, some of whom desert, and others of whom are overcome by fatigue; but the army of God is “gathered up;” none desert from it if they be real soldiers of the cross, and none drop down upon the road. The God of Israel gathers them up. He who goes before, like a shepherd before the flock, providing pasture for them, comes behind that he may gather the lambs in his arms—that he may gently lead those that are with young. “The God of Israel is your rereward.” Now the church of Christ has been frequently attacked in the rear. It often happens that the enemy, tired of opposing the onward march by open persecution, attempts to malign the church concerning something that has either been taught, or revealed, or done in past ages. Now, the God of Israel is our rereward. I am never at trouble about the attacks of infidels or heretics, however vigorously they may assault the doctrines of the Gospel, I will leave them alone; I have no answer for their logic; if they look to be resisted by mere reason, they look in vain; I have the simple answer of an affirmation, grounded upon the fact that God had said it. It is the only warfare I will enter into with them. If they must attack the rear let them fight with Jehovah himself. If the doctrines of the Gospel be as base as they say they are, let them cast discredit upon God, who

revealed the doctrines; let them settle the question between God's supreme wisdom and their own pitiful pretensions to knowledge. It is not for Christian men to fear about the rear of the church. The doctrines of the Gospel, which are like the heavy baggage carried in the rear, or like the great guns kept behind against the time when they are wanted in the hour of battle, these are quite safe. The Amalekites may fall upon the stuff, or the Philistines may attack the ammunition, all is safe, for God is in the rereward; and let them but appear against our rear, and they shall instantly be put to the rout.

But I am thinking that perhaps the later trials of the church may represent the rereward. There are to come, perhaps, to the church, in days that are approaching, fiercer persecutions that she has ever known. We cannot tell, we are no pretenders to prophecy, but we know that it always has been so with the church—a time of prosperity and then a period of persecution. She has a Solomon, and she reigns in all her glory under his shadow; hut in after years Antiochus oppresses her, and she needs a Judas Maccabæus to deliver her. Perhaps we are living in an age too soft for the church. The Capuan holidays that ruined the soldiers of Hannibal may rob the church now; ease and lack of persecution may put us off our guard. Perhaps, there may come yet fiercer times for us. I know not what is meant by the battle of Armageddon, but sometimes I fear we are to expect trial and trouble in years to come; but certain I am, however fierce those troubles shall be, that God, who has gone before his church in olden times, will gather up the rear, and she who has been *Ecclesia victrix*—the church, the conqueror, will still be the same, and her rear shall constitute at last a part of the church triumphant, even as already glorified.

Can you now conceive the last great day when Jehovah, the rereward shall gather up his people? The time is come; the last of the salt is about to be removed; the church of God is now about to be carried up to dwell with her husband. Do you see the church moving upwards towards heaven? Behind her she leaves a world in flames; she sees the earth destroyed, God removes it as a shepherd's tent; the inhabitants thereof are gone, and the tent must be folded up; as a vesture shall they be folded up, and they shall be changed. But between the church and a blazing world, between the church and the terrible destruction of hell, there is the bright pillar of God's presence—black to his enemies behind, but bright to his church in front. The close of the great dispensation of the Mediator shall be that the God of Israel shall be all in all, his church shall be completely safe; he shall have gathered up all things in one, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth. Then shall the sonnet of the poet be more than fulfilled to the rejoicing and perfected church.

“Daughter of Zion, awake from thy sadness,
 Awake, for thy foes shall oppress thee no more;
 Bright o'er thy hills dawns the day-star of gladness:
 Arise, for the night of thy sorrow is o'er.
 Strong were thy foes, but the arm that subdued them,
 And scatter'd their legions, was mightier far;
 They fled, like the chaff, from the scourge that pursued them,
 Vain were their steeds, and their chariots of war.
 Daughter of Zion, the power that hath saved thee
 Extoll'd with the harp and the timbrel should be:
 Shout, for the foe is destroy'd that enslaved thee,
 The oppressor is vanquish'd, and Zion is free.”

II. Let us turn to the second part of the sermon. We are now come to the last Sabbath of the year. Two troubles present themselves, the *future* and the *past*. We shall soon launch into another year, and hitherto we have found our years, years of trouble. We have had mercies, but still we find this house of our pilgrimage is not an abiding city, not a mansion of peace and comfort. Perhaps we are trembling to go forward. Foreseeing trouble, we know not how we shall be able to endure to the end. We are standing here and pausing for a while, sitting down upon the stone of our Ebenezer to rest ourselves, gazing dubiously into the future, saying, "Alas! what shall I do? Surely, I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy." Brother, arise, arise; anoint your head, and wash your face, and fast no longer; let this sweet morsel now cheer you; put this bottle to your lips, and let your eyes be enlightened: "The Lord Jehovah will go before you." He has gone before you already. Your future path has all been marked out in the great decrees of his *predestination*. You shall not tread a step which is not mapped out in the great chart of God's decree. Your troubles have been already weighed for you in the scales of his love; your labour is already set aside for you to accomplish by the hand of his wisdom. Depend upon it.

"Your times of trial and of grief,
Your times of joy and sweet relief,
All shall come and last and end
As shall please your heavenly Friend."

Remember, you are not a child of chance. If you were, you might indeed fear. You will go nowhere next year except where God shall send you. You shall be thrust into the hot coals of the fire, but God shall put you there. You shall perhaps be much depressed in spirit, but that heaviness shall be for your good, and shall come from your Father; you shall have the rod, but it shall not be the rod of the wicked—it shall be in God's hand. Oh! how comfortable the thought that everything is in the hand of God, and that all that may occur to me during the future years of my life is fore-ordained and overruled by the great Jehovah, who is my Father and my friend! Now stop, Christian, a moment, and realize the idea that God has gone before, mapping the way; and then let me ask you if you could now this morning be allowed to draw a fresh map, would you do it? If he should condescend to say, "Now your circumstances next year shall be just what you like; you shall have your own way, and go your own route to heaven, would you dare, even with God's permission, to draw a new chart?" If you should have that presumption, I know the result: you would find that you had gone the wrong way; you would soon be glad enough to retrace your step, and with many tears you would go to your heavenly Father, and say, "My Father, I have had enough to do with the helm of this ship; it is hard work to hold it; do what thou wilt with it; steer which way thou pleasest, though it be through the deepest floods and the hottest flame. I am weary, I sleep at the tiller, I cannot guide the ship, my tears fall fast from my eyes, for when I think to be wise I find myself to have committed folly; when I thought I was promoting my own advantage in my scheme, I find I am rushing into a sea of losses." God, then, has gone before you in the decree of his predestination.

And recollect, God has gone before you in all your future journey in the actual *preparations of his providence*.

I do not think I am capable this morning, for my mind seems to wander far more than I could desire, of sketching how it is, but so it is, that God always makes a providence beforehand ready for his people when they get to the place. My God does not hastily erect a tent over me when I come to a certain spot. No; he builds an inn of mercy, and before I get there he provides a bed of

comfort, and stores up the old wines of grace, that I may feast upon them. And all this is done long before I come to the actual necessity. None of us can tell how the future leans on the past, how a simple act of to-day shall bring about a grand event in a hundred years. We do not know how the future lies in the bowels of the past, and how *what is to be* is the child of *that which is*. As all men spring from their progenitors, so the providence of to-day springs from the providence of a hundred years past. The events of next year have been forestalled by God in what he has done this year and years before. I am certain of this, that on the road I am to travel during the next year, everything is ready for me. I am not going a road of hills and deep valleys, but I have heard the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." I say again, you are not going through a land that God has not prepared for you. O Israel, there is a well of Elim made for you long before you came out of Egypt, and there are palm trees that have been growing there that they might just come to the fruit-bearing state, and have fruit upon them, when you come there. O Israel, God is not going to extemporize a Canaan for you; it is ready made, it is even now flowing with milk and honey; the vines that are to bear you grapes of Eshcol are already there and coming to perfection. God has forestalled your trials and troubles for the next year. The Lord Jehovah has gone before you.

There is also another phase of this subject. Jehovah has gone before us in *the incarnation of Christ*. As to our future troubles for next year and the remnant of our days, Jesus Christ has borne them all before. As for temptation, he "has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." As for trials and sorrows, he has felt all we can possibly feel, and infinitely more. As for our difficulties, Christ has trodden the road before. We may rest quite sure that we shall not go anywhere where Christ has not gone. The way of God's people in providence is the exact track of Christ himself. The footsteps of the flock are identical with the footsteps of the shepherd, so far as they follow the leading and guidings of God.

And there is this reflection also, that, inasmuch as Christ has gone before us, he has done something in that going before, for he has *conquered every foe* that lies in his way. Cheer up now thou faint-hearted warrior. Not only has Christ travelled the road, but he has slain thine enemies. Dost thou dread sin? he has nailed it to his cross. Dost thou dread death? he has been the death of Death. Art thou afraid of hell? he has barred it against the advent of any of his children; they shall never see the gulf of perdition. Whatever foes may be before the Christian, they are all overcome. There are lions, but their teeth are broken; there are serpents, but their fangs are extracted; there are rivers but they are bridged or fordable; there are flames, but we have upon us that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire. The sword that has been forged against us is already blunted; the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing have already lost their point. God has taken away in the person of Christ all the power that anything can have to hurt us. Well then, the army may safely march on and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand. What shall you do but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are

vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. Your future life shall be only the dividing of the spoil. You shall, it is true, often dread combat; and you shall sometimes have to wield the spear, but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe. His head is broken; he may attempt to injure you, but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be easy, and your treasure shall be beyond all count. Come boldly on then, for Jehovah shall go before you. This shall be our sweet song when we come to the river of death: Black are its streams, and there are terrors there of which I cannot dream. But shall I fear to go through the dark stream if Jehovah goes before me? There may be goblins of frightful shape, there may be horrors of a hellish hue, but thou, Jehovah, shalt clear the way, thou shalt bid each enemy begone, and each fiend shall flee at thy bidding. I may march safely on. So confident would I feel in this great vanguard, that shouldst thou bid me go through hell itself, I need not fear all the terrors of the place of doom; for if Jehovah went before, he would tread out even to the last spark the fire; he would quench even to the last flame that burning; and the child of God might march safely through the flame that had been quenched and the ashes that were extinguished. Let us therefore never be troubled about the future. It is all safe, for Jehovah has gone before.

Now I hear one say, "The future seldom troubles me, sir; it is *the past*—what I have done and what I have not done—the years that are gone—how I have sinned, and how I have not served my master as I ought. These things grieve me, and sometimes my old sins start up in my recollection and accuse me; 'What! shalt THOU be saved?' say they, 'Remember us.' And they spring up in number like the sands of the sea. I cannot deny that I have committed all these sins, nor can I say that they are not the most guilty of iniquities. Oh! it is the rereward that is most unsafe. I dead most the sins of the past." O beloved, the God of Israel shall be your rereward. Notice the different titles. The first is "the Lord," or properly "Jehovah"—"Jehovah will go before you." That is the *I am*, full of omniscience and omnipotence. The second title is "God of Israel," that is to say, the God of the Covenant. We want the God of the Covenant behind, because it is not in the capacity of the *I am*, the omnipotent, that we require him to pardon sin, to accept our persons, to blot out the past, and to remove iniquity by the blood of Christ; it is as *the God of the Covenant* that he does that. He goes behind; here he finds that his child has left a black mark, and he takes that away; he finds here a heap of rubbish, a mass of broken good works, and here another load of evil, of filth, and he carefully removes all, so that in that track of his children there is not a spot or a blemish; and though they have trodden the road the most observant of their foes at the last great day shall not be able to find that they have done any mischief on the journey, or one wrong thing in all their march, for the God of Israel hath so swept the way that he has taken away their iniquities and cast their sins behind his back.

Now let me always think, that I have God behind me as well as before me. Let not the memories of the past, though they cause me grief, cause me despair. Let me never bemoan because of past trial or past bereavement; let me never be cast down on account of past sin; but let me look to Christ for the pardon of the past, and to God for the sanctification of my past troubles. Let me believe that he who has cleared the way before me, has removed all enemies from behind me, that I am and must be perpetually safe. And now, are there any here to-day whose hearts God hath touched, who desire to join this great army? Have I one here who has been enlisted in the black army of the devil, and has long been fighting his way against God and against right? I pray that he may be compelled this day to ground his arms, and surrender at discretion to God. Sinner, if the Lord inclines thine heart this day to yield up thyself to him, the past shall all be blotted out; God shall be thy rereward.

As for thy innumerable sins, leave them to Christ; he will make short work of them; by his blood he will slay them all; they shall not be mentioned against thee for ever. And as for the future, thou chief of sinners, if now thou enlistest into the army of Christ by faith, thou shalt find the future shall be strewn with the gold of God's grace, and the silver of his temporal mercies; thou shalt have enough and to spare, from this day forth even to the end, and at the last thou shalt be gathered in by the great arms of God, that constitute the rear guard of his heavenly army. Come ye chief of sinners, come away to Christ. He now invites you to come to him; he asks nothing of you as a preparation. Christ's regiment is made up of men that are in debt and are discontented: the rag-tag of the world Christ will take; the scum, the dross, the offal of the universe Christ loves; the sweepings of our dens of iniquity, the very leavings of the devil's mill Christ is willing to receive, the chief of sinners, those who have been ministers in guilt, abortions of iniquity. Come to him; lay hold of him by faith; look to him as he hangs upon the tree; believe in his merits, and then shalt this promise be yours with innumerable others that are rich beyond all estimation; and you shall rejoice that Jehovah is gone before you, and that the God of Israel shall be your reward.

Faith in Perfection

A Sermon

(No. 231)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 2nd, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.”—Psalm 138:8.

I HAVE SELECTED THIS TEXT, or, rather, it has been given to me to furnish a motto for the whole year to all the believing family of God now present. It was brought under my notice from the fact that I have a very dear friend, a venerable minister of the Church of England, and an earnest lover of the truth as it is in Jesus, who always sends me, at the beginning of the year, or a day or two previously, a little envelope sealed up, that I am not to open till New Year's day, containing a printed text of Scripture, which he desires to be preserved during the remainder of the year, to act as a staff whereon we may rest through the pilgrimage of the next twelve months. When I opened my envelope I found this text, and it charmed me. It contains in itself the very essence of the grace of God. It reads like music to the soul, and is like a bottle of water in the desert to the thirsty lip. Let me read it again, and remember it, and dwell upon it, and digest it during all the year. “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.”

In the opening, I must remark that this is not the heritage of all mankind. The word, “me,” in the text, cannot be appropriated by any man, unless he, in some respects, resembles the character of David, who penned this psalm. The text, however, itself, is its own guard. If you look at it, you will see that there is in its bowels a full description of a true Christian. I will ask you three questions suggested by the words themselves, and according to your answer to these three questions, shall be my reply, yes or no, as to whether this promise belongs to you.

To begin, let us read the first sentence—“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.” Now, have you a concern *in* and a concern *about* heavenly things? Have you ever felt that eternity concerns you more than time; that the mansions of heaven are more worthy your consideration than the dwelling-places of earth? Have you felt that you ought to have a greater concern about your immortal soul than about your perishing body? Remember, if you are living the life of the butterfly, the life of the present, a sportive and flowery life, without making any preparation or taking any thought for a future world, this promise is not yours. If the things of God do not concern you, then God will not perfect them for you. You must have in your own soul a concern about these things, and afterwards you must have a belief in your heart that you have an interest in heavenly things, or otherwise it would be a perversion of Holy Scripture for you to appropriate these precious things to yourselves. Can we then, each of us put our hand upon our heart and say, without stammering, which suggests a hypocrite—can we say honestly, as in the sight of God; “I am concerned about the things of God, of Christ, of salvation, of eternity! I may not have assurance, but I have concern. If I cannot say, I know in whom I have believed, yet I can say I know in whom I desire to believe. If I cannot say, I know that my Redeemer liveth, yet I can say I desire that I may be found in him

at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Well soul, if thou hast a concern about the things of God, this is thy promise, and let not Master Clip-promise take it away from thee; suffer him not to take any part of its preciousness; it is all thine, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth thee."

Another question is suggested by the second clause, "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever." Have we then tasted of God's mercy? Have you and I gone to the throne of grace conscious of our lost estate? Have we made confession of our sins? Have we looked to the blood of Jesus; and do we know that the mercy of God has been manifested to us? Have we breathed the dying thief's petition, and have we had the gracious answer of Jesus? Have we prayed as the publican did? and have we gone to our house justified by God's mercy? Remember, O man! if thou hast never received God's pardoning mercy and his forgiving grace, this text is a divine enclosure, into which thou hast no right to intrude; this is a banquet, of which thou hast no right to eat; this is a secret place, into which thou hast no right to enter. We must first taste God's mercy and, having tasted that, we may believe that he will perfect that which concerneth us.

A third question, and I beseech you put these questions to your heart, lest you should be misled, by any comfortable words that I shall hereafter speak, into the foul delusion, that this promise signifies yourself, when it does not. The last question is suggested by the prayer, "Forsake not the works of thine own hands." Have you then a religion which is the work of God's hands? Many men have a religion which is their own work, there is nothing supernatural about it; human nature began it, human nature has carried it on, and as far they have any hope they trust that human nature will complete it. Remember there is no spring on earth that has force enough in it to spout a fountain into paradise, and there is no strength in human nature that shall ever suffice to raise a soul to heaven. You may practice morality, and I beseech you do so; you may attend to ceremonies and you have a right to do so, and must do so; you may endeavour to do all righteousness, but since you are a sinner condemned in the sight of God, you can never be pardoned apart from the blood of Christ; and you can never be purified apart from the purifying operations of the Holy Ghost. That man's religion which is born on earth, and born of the will of the flesh or of blood, is a vain religion. Oh! beloved, except a man be born again, or *from above*, as the original has it, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and cannot enter heaven; only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and is, therefore, capable of inheriting a spiritual inheritance, which God reserves for spiritual men. Have I then the work of God in my heart? am I sure it is not my own work? If I am, experimentally, an Arminian, and if I think I have proved the truth of Arminian religion, then I have no religion that will carry me to heaven. But if, experimentally, I am compelled to confess that grace begins, that grace carries on, and that grace must perfect my religion, then God having began the good work in me, I am the person for whom this verse is intended, and I may sit down at this celestial banquet and eat and drink to my very full.

Let each hearer, then, pause and put these three questions to himself,—Am I concerned about religion? Have I tasted the mercy of God? Is my religion God's work? They are solemn questions; answer them! and if ye can even humbly say "Yes," then come ye to this text, for the joy and comfort of it is yours.

We have three things here. First, *the believer's confidence*,—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Secondly, *the ground of that confidence*,—"Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever;" and thirdly, *the result and outgrowth of his confidence expressed in the prayer*,—"Forsake not the works of thine own hands."

I. First, then, THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE,—“The Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me.” I think, perhaps, the best way to preach upon a text, if we would have it remembered, is to take it word by word. Let us spell it over then, as Uncle Tom did, when he was on board of the steamer, and could not read the long words, but sucked more sweetness out of the text by spelling it over, than he could have done in any other way.

“The Lord.” Well then the Psalmist's confidence was a divine confidence. He did not say, “I have grace enough to perfect that which concerneth me;” “my faith is so strong that I shall not fail;” “my love is so warm that it will never grow cold;” “my resolution is so firmly set that nothing can move it;”—no, his dependance was on the Lord—“*The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*” And O Christian, if thou hast any confidence which is not grounded on the Lord and rooted in the rock of ages, thy confidence is worse than a dream; it shall deceive thee, pierce thee, wound thee, and cast thee down to thine own future sorrow and grief. But here, our Psalmist himself builds upon nothing else than upon the Lord's works. Sure I am the Lord began the good work in our souls, he has carried it on, and if he does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there be one stitch in the celestial garment of my righteousness, which I am to insert myself, then I am lost. If there be one drachma in the price of my redemption which I am to make up, then must I perish. If there be one contingency—one “if,” or “though,” or “but,” about my soul's salvation, then am I a lost man. But this is my confidence, the Lord that began will perfect. He has done it all, must do it all, he will do it all. My confidence must not be in what I can do, or in what I have resolved to do, but entirely in what the Lord *will* do. “*The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*” “Oh,” says unbelief, “you will never be able to purify yourself from sin. Look at the evil of your heart, you can never sweep that away: look at the evil fashions and temptations of the world that beset you, you will surely be lured aside and led astray.” Ah! yes, I should indeed perish if it depended upon myself. I am but as clay upon the wheel. If I had to fashion myself into a vessel of honour, fit for the Master's use, I might give up the work in despair. I am but as a little lamb; and if I had to travel through the wilderness by myself, I might indeed lie down and die. Yet if I be clay, he is my potter, and he will not suffer me to be marred upon the wheel; and if I be a lamb he is my shepherd, and he carrieth the lambs in his bosom—he wardeth off the wolf, he smiteth the destroyer, and he bringeth every sheep into the fold upon the hilltop of glory. The Lord, then, is the Christian's divine confidence. We can never be too confident when we confide in the Lord. “Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me.”

Take the next word, “*will.*” So the Psalmist's confidence was a confidence for the future; it is not only what the Lord does, but what the Lord will do. I have heard people say that they could trust a man as far as they could see him; and I have often thought that is about as far as many professors trust God, so far as they can see him, and no farther. They believe God is good when the meat is on the table, and the drink is in the cup, but would they believe God if the table were bare, and the cup were empty? No; they have good faith when they see the ravens coming, that they shall have their bread and meat; but if the ravens did not come, would they believe that even then their bread should be given them and their water should be sure? They can believe the thing when they get it, but until they get it they are doubting. The Psalmist's faith, however, deals with the future, not merely with the present. The “Lord will,” says he, the “Lord will.” He looks on all through his life, and he feels sure that what God has done and is doing he will carry on even to the end. And now you that are afraid about the future, rest with us in this sweet promise. How often do you and I stand star-gazing into the future, and trembling, because we think we see divers

portents, and strange sights, which portend some future trouble. O child of God! leave the future to thy God. O leave everything that is to come in the hand of him to whom the future is already present, and who knows beforehand everything that shalt befall thee. Draw from the present living water with which to moisten the arid desert of the future; snatch from the altar-fires of to-day a torch with which to light up the darkness of that which is to come. Depend on it, that *He* who is to-day thy sun, shall be thy sun for ever—even in the darkest hour he shall shine upon thee; and he who is to-day thy shield shall be thy shield for evermore; and even in the thickest part of the battle he shall catch the dart, and thou shalt stand unharmed.

Let us turn to this word "*will*" once again. There is a little more in it; it does not say the "Lord may," it does not say, "I hope he will; I trust he will," but it says he will; "The Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me." A few months after I first sought and found salvation, I enjoyed the sweet privilege of full assurance, and in talking with a godly Christian I expressed myself very confidently concerning the great truth that God would ne'er forsake his people, nor leave his work undone. I was at once child, I was told I had no right to speak so confidently, for it was presumptuous. The longer I live, the more I feel persuaded that confidence was proper, and the chiding was not deserved. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take his word simply as it stands, and believe it and ask no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it it will be so. The Psalmist in our text had no more doubt about his own ultimate perfection, than he had about his existence. He says, "the Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me." There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know *shall* happen,

"He *shall* present my soul,
Unblemish'd and complete,
Before the glory of his face,
With joys divinely great."

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken, many of them are made to be broken, but the purposes of God shall stand, and his promises shall be fulfilled. He is a promise maker, but he never was a promise breaker: he is a promise-keeping God, and his people shall prove it so. Come then, ye that are always hoping amidst trembling, and fear, but are never confident, for once take that doubting note out of your mouth, and say assuredly "the Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me." If I be really his child, though full of sin, I shall one day be perfect; if I have really set my heart towards him, I shall one day see his face with joy; and let whatever foes obstruct, I *shall* conquer through the Lamb's redeeming blood. He "*will* perfect that which concerneth me." I like to hear God's people speak diffidently of themselves, but confidently of their God. Doubts are the greatest of sins, and even though Christians have doubts, yet doubts are unchristian things. The spirit of Christ is not a spirit of doubting, but a spirit of believing. Doubts may exist in the hearts of spiritual men, but doubts are unspiritual, carnal, and sinful. Let us seek to get rid of them, and speak confidently where God's word is confident.

Now, take the next word, "The Lord will *perfect*." That is a large word. Our Wesleyan brethren have a notion that they are going to be perfect here on earth. I should be very glad to see any of them when they are perfect; and if any of them happen to be in the position of servants and want a situation, I would be happy to give them any amount of wages I could spare, for I should feel myself greatly honoured and greatly blessed in having a perfect servant; and what is more, if any

of them are masters and want servants, I would undertake to come and serve them without wages at all if I could but find a perfect master. I have had a perfect master ever since I first knew the Lord, and if I could find that there is another perfect master, I should be greatly pleased in having him as an under-master, while the great Supreme must ever be chief of all. Did you ever see a perfect man? I did once. He called upon me, and wanted me to come and see him, for I should get great instruction from him if I did. I said, "I have no doubt of it, but I should not like to come into your house; I think I should be hardly able to get into your room." How is that? "Well, I suppose your house would be so full of angels that there would not be room for me." He did not like that; so I broke another joke or two upon his head; whereupon he went into a perfect furor. "Well friend," I said to him, "I think I am as perfect as you after all; for perfect men get angry?" He denied that he was angry, although there was a peculiar redness about his cheeks that is very common to persons when they are angry; at any rate I think I rather spoiled his perfection, for he evidently went home less satisfied with himself than when he went out. I met another man who considered himself perfect, but he was thoroughly mad; and I do not believe that any of your pretenders to perfection are better than good maniacs, superior bedlamites; that is all I believe they are. For while a man has got a spark of reason left in him, he cannot, unless he is the most impudent of imposters, talk about his being perfect. What would I not give to be perfect myself! And you can say also, what would you not give to be perfect. If I must be burnt in fire, or dragged through the sea by the hair of my head; if I must be buried in the bowels of the earth, or hung up to the stars for ever—if I might but be perfect, I would rejoice in any price I might have to pay for perfection. But I feel perfectly persuaded, that perfection is absolutely impossible to any man beneath the sky; and yet, I feel sure, that to every believer future perfection is an absolute certainty. The day shall come, beloved, when the Lord shall not only make us better, but shall make us perfectly good; when he shall not merely subdue our lusts, but when he shall cast the demons out; when he shall make us not only tolerable, and bearable, and endurable, but make us holy and acceptable in his sight. That day however, I believe, shall not come until we enter into the joy of our Lord, and are glorified together with Christ in heaven.

Say, Christian, is not this a large confidence? "The Lord will make me perfect." He will most assuredly, beyond a doubt, bring to perfection my faith, my love, my hope, and every grace. He will perfect his purposes; he will perfect his promises; he will perfect my body, and perfect my soul. "He will *perfect* that which concerneth me."

And now there is the word "*that*"—"that which"—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Very indefinite, it seems; but how broad it is. What a broad faith the Psalmist had! "Whatever concerns me," says he, "the Lord will perfect." Once pardon of sin concerned me; *that* he has perfected. Then imputed righteousness concerned me; *that* he perfected. Now, sanctification troubles me; *that* he will perfect. One day, deliverance was my fear; now it is support. But whatever is laid upon my heart to be concerned about, this comprehensive term, "that" embraces all, be it what it may, if I have a spiritual concern upon my soul about any heavenly thing, that will God perfect.

Go on a step further. Here is a trial of faith. "The Lord will perfect that which *concerneth* me." Alas, beloved, we cannot say we have any good thing without having concern for it. I suppose God never gave us a blessing, but we doubted whether we should have it before we obtained it. Somehow or other, our doubts always go before God's mercies; whereas we ought to believe, and not to feel any anxiety and distrustful concern. My faith is sometimes tried and concerned about heavenly things now. But though that faith be tried by an inward concern about the things of God, yet it

surmounts even its own doubts, and cries, "The Lord will perfect even this." Have you learnt this lesson aright—being troubled about a thing and yet believing about it? A christian man will find his experience to be very much like the sea. Upon the surface there is a storm, and the mountain-waves are rolling, but down in the depths there are caverns where quietude has reigned supreme ever since the foundations of the earth were digged; where peace, undisturbed, has had a solitary triumph. Beloved, it is so with the Christian's heart. Outwardly, he is concerned about these things. He doubts, he fears, he trembles; but in his inmost heart, down in the depths of his soul, he is without a fear, and he can say confidently, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

But I hasten to dwell upon the last word. The faith of our text is a personal faith. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth *me*." Here is the loudest note of all; this is the handle whereby we must lay hold of this sword if we would use it aright—"that which concerneth *me*." Oh, it is a sweet truth to know and believe that God will perfect all his saints; 'tis sweeter still to know that "he will perfect *me*." It is blessed to believe that all God's people shall persevere; but the essence of delight is to feel that *I* shall persevere through him. Many persons are contented with a kind of general religion, an universal salvation. They belong to a Christian community; they have joined a Christian church, and they think they shall be saved in the lump—in the mass; but give me a personal religion. What is all the bread in the world, unless I myself feed upon it? I am starved, though Egypt be full of corn. What are all the rivers that run from the mountains to the sea, if I be thirsty? Unless I drink myself, what are all these? If I be poor and in rags, ye do but mock me if ye tell me that Potosi's mines are full of treasure? You do but laugh at me if you speak of Golconda's diamonds. What care I for these, unless I have some participation for myself? But if I can say even of my crust, "It is my own," then I can eat it with a grateful heart. That crust which is my own is more precious than all the granaries of Egypt if they are not my own, and this promise even if it were smaller would be more precious than the largest promise that stands in the Bible, if I could not see my right to it personally myself. But now, by bumble faith, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, resting in his merits, trusting in his death, I come to the text, and say throughout this year, and every year, "The Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth *me*"—unworthy *me*. Lost and ruined *me*. He will yet save *me*; and

"I, among the blood-wash'd throng,
Shall wave the palm, and wear the crown,
And shout loud victory."

This, then, is the believer's confidence. May God grant you the same!

II. The second thing is THE GROUND OF THIS CONFIDENCE. The ground of it is this—"Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." The believer is sure he shall be saved. Why? Because of his merits? No. Because of the strength of his own faith? No. Because he has something which will recommend him to God? No; he believes he shall be perfected because of God's mercy. Is it not a strange thing that the advanced believer, when he reaches to the very height of piety, just comes to the spot where he commenced? Do we not begin at the cross, and when we have climbed over so high, is it not at the cross that we end? I know my pilgrimage shall never end to my heart's content till at his cross again I cast my wreath and lay my honours down. My sins I laid there, and aught else that he has given me I would lay there too. Ye began there and your watchword is the cross. While yet the hosts are preparing for the battle, it is the cross. And ye have fought the fight and your sword is red with blood, and your head is crowned with triumph. And what is the watchword now? The cross. That which is our strength in battle is our boast in victory. Mercy must be the

theme of our song here; and mercy enduring for ever must be the subject of the sonnets of paradise. None other can be fit sinners; nay, and none other can be fit, grateful saints.

Come then, beloved, let us just look at this ground of our confidence, and see whether it will bear our weight. It is said that elephants when they are going to cross a bridge are always very careful to sound it, to see whether it will bear them. If they see a horse going over safely that is not enough, for they say to themselves, "I am an elephant, and I must see whether it will bear me." Now, we should always do the same with a promise and with the groundwork of a promise. The promise may have been proved by others before you, but if you feel yourselves to be like huge elephantine sinners, you want to be quite certain whether the arches of the promise are quite strong enough to bear the weight of your sins. Now, I say, here is God's mercy. Ah! this is indeed all-sufficient. What was it that first led the Lord to bring you and me into the covenant at all? It was mercy, pure mercy. We were dead in sin. We had not any merits to recommend us, for some of us used to curse and swear like infidels; some of us were drunkards, sinners of the deepest dye. And why did God save us? Simply because he has said, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy."

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?"

'Twas mercy. Well, then, if mercy made God choose me, if he chose me from no other motive than mercy, if that mercy always is the same, he always will choose me, and always will love me. Do you not know it is a rule which none can dispute, that the same cause must always produce the same effect. We are told that the volcano is caused by certain fires within the earth, which must find their vent. Now, as long as there are those inward fires, and they are in a condition to require the vent, the vent they must have. When the cause is the same, the effect must be the same.

The sole cause then, of the salvation of any man is the mercy of God, and not his merits. God does not look at you whether you are a good man or a bad man; he does not save you because of anything in yourself, but because he will do as he pleases, and because he loves to act mercifully: that is his only reason. Oh! my God, if thou lovedst me when I had not any faith, thou wilt not cast me away because my faith is weak now. If thou lovedst me when I had all my sin about me, thou wilt not leave off loving me now thou hast pardoned me. If thou lovedst me when I was in my rags, and beggary, and filth, when there was nothing to recommend me; at least, my God, I am not further fallen than I was then, or, if I am, the same boundless mercy that loved me when I was lost, will love me, lost though I be even now. Do you not see it is because the basis of eternal love is that on which we build we derive this inference, that if the base cannot move, the pyramid will not. "The mercy of God endureth for ever: the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

Note the very words of the text: "Thy mercy, O Lord." David brings his confidence into the court of Divine inspection, in order that it may there be proved. He says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." It is very well for you and I to speak thus here this morning, but dare we go up to the very temple of God, and there, feeling his presence, actually present our confidence before him, and ask him to try it. There are many hypocrites in the world that would tremble to play the hypocrite if they felt that they were in the presence of God. But here we have a man that dares to bring his faith to God's tribunal; he puts it in the scales of infinite justice, and waits the decision. "Thy mercy, O Lord." Can you do the same? Who among us can cry out with Toplady—

"The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do,

My Saviour's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view."

Can you come into God's presence and say this, or, to quote Hart's words, can you say
"Great God I'm clean,
Through Jesu's blood I'm clean."

He that can say that is blessed indeed; the Lord *shall* perfect that which concerneth him.

Ah, what if God's mercy towards men should change? Blessed be his name it cannot; it endureth for ever. But what if he should remove his mercy from one man to another? That also he will never do; it endureth for ever. But suppose we should sin so much that God's mercy should give way? It cannot give way; it endureth all the weight of sin; it endureth for ever. But what if we should live in sin so long that at last God denied mercy to us even though we believed in him? That cannot be; we cannot sin longer than for ever—his mercy cannot be tried longer, and even if it could be tried for ever it would endure for ever. All the weight of my trouble, all the weight of my backsliding, all the weight of my evil heart of unbelief—all these the everlasting arches of divine mercy can and will sustain. Those arches never shall rock; the stone never shall be crumbled; it never shall be swept away by even the floods of eternity itself. Because his mercy endureth for ever, God will most assuredly perfect the work of his hands.

And now I come to the third and last point, and here may the Holy Spirit help me to stir up your minds to prayer.

III. The third particular is—THE RESULT OF THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE—it leads him to prayer. Out upon those men who have a confidence that helps them to live without prayer. There are men that live in this world who say we do not need evidences, we do not need prayer, we do not need good works. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, and said unto me, Thou art one of God's elect, an thou mayest live in sin, and do whatever thou pleasest, I will save thee at last." Such characters I hope are getting rare. Alas! there are certain places of worship where such a religion as that is fostered, if it be not begotten. There are some ministers—I trust they hardly know what they are about—who by leaving out the doctrine of man's responsibility, naturally lead men into that guilty and abominable doctrine of Antinomianism which has done so much to injure the cause of Christ. Hear then, ye seed of the presumptuous, and ye that bear the whore's forehead, hear and tremble. The Lord hath not chosen you, neither has he cast your name into his lap. He has chosen no man who lives and dies presumptuously, trusting that he is chosen when he has no evidence of it. Do you live without prayer? Ah! soul; election hath nought to do with thee. What is intended by the doctrine of reprobation is far more likely to be thy lot than the glorious inheritance of election. Dost thou live in sin, that grace may abound! Every man's damnation is just, but thine shall be emphatically so. What! dost thou dare to palm thyself off as a child of God when thou art a brat of hell? Dost thou claim that thou art a heir of light, when the damning mark of Cain is on thy very forehead? What! when thou art like Balaam, presumptuous and abominable, dost thou dare still to claim a lot in the inheritance of the saints in light? Away with thy confidence; "Hail shall sweep away thy refuge of lies." The true-born child of God has a spot that is not like thy spot; he is of a different mould and make from thee. Thou art a deceiver—not the legitimate child of God.

Mark, my friends, in the text, that a genuine confidence in God does not lead us to give up prayer, but leads us to prayer. "The Lord will perfect me." Am I, therefore to say, "He will do it, and I will not pray?" No, because he will do it, therefore will I pray. Many persons have such

shallow minds that they cannot perceive how God's determination and our own free action can go together. I never find these people making the same mistake in common life they do on religious subjects. A man says to me, "Now, sir, if God intends to save me, I need do nothing." He knows he is a fool when he says it; or if he does not know it, I will soon make him see it. Suppose he says, again, "If the Lord intends to feed me, he will feed me, and I will go without my dinner. If the Lord intends to give me a harvest, he will give me a harvest, and I shall not sow any wheat, and I shall not plough." Suppose another were to say, "If the Lord intends to keep me warm to-day, he will do it; so I will not put on my coat." Suppose a man should say, again, "If the Lord intends me to go to bed to-night, I shall go to bed; and, therefore, I shall not walk towards home, but sit here as long as I like." You smile at once, because the folly is self-convicting. But is it not just the same in religion? Because "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," am I to say I shall not pray? Why, no, my dear friends, the fact is, that a knowledge that a thing is certain prompts a wise man to action. What made Oliver Cromwell fight so bravely, but because he felt convinced that he should conquer? He did not say, "I know that I shall conquer, therefore I will not fight;" no, he said, "I know that I shall conquer; therefore keep your powder dry, trust in God, and at 'em!" So with you; if you believe the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us, begin with prayer; trust the promise, and let us go on cheerfully through the world, rejoicing in the Lord our God. Confidence must not lead to idleness, but to diligent activity.

And now, note this prayer,—“Forsake not the works of thine own hands.” The prayer is full of confession; it must be that, or else it is never true prayer. The Psalmist confesses, that if God did forsake him it would be all over with him, and this is a truth, brethren, that you and I ought ever to keep in mind. We sometimes pray that God will not forsake us in temptation; do you not know we should be as much lost if he were to forsake us in communion as if he were to forsake us in temptation. When God puts you on the pinnacle of the temple, you need say, “Lord, hold me up and I shall be safe; do not forsake me here.” When you are down on the ground, if the Lord were to forsake you, there you would perish just as easily as on the pinnacle of the temple. I have known the Christian on his knees in the den of leopards, cry, “Lord, save me now,” but do you know that he has as great a need of help when he is on the top of Pisgah? for he still wants to be kept. Every moment of our life we are on the brink of hell, and if the Lord should forsake us, we should certainly perish. Let him but withdraw the salt of his grace, and the proudest believer must be cast into the depths of hell, and fall, like Lucifer, never to rise again. Oh! let this always make us cry aloud, “Forsake us not, O God.”

There is yet another confession in the text—the Psalmist's confession that all he has he has from God. “Forsake not the works of thine own hands.” I will not however dwell upon it, but urge you who are believers, to go home and cry aloud to God in prayer. Let this be a new year's-day prayer. “Forsake not the work of thine hands. Father, forsake not thy little child, lest he die by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, forsake not thy lamb, lest the wolves devour him. Great husbandman, forsake not thy little plant, lest the frost should nip it, and it should be destroyed. Forsake me not, O Lord now, and when I am old and grey headed, O Lord, forsake me not. Forsake me not in my joys, lest I curse God. Forsake me not in my sorrows, lest I murmur against him. Forsake me not in the day of my repentance, lest I lose the hope of pardon, and fall into despair; and forsake me not in the day of my strongest faith, lest my faith degenerate into presumption, and so I perish by mine own hand.” Cry out to God, that he would not forsake you in your business, in your family; that he would not forsake you either upon your bed by night, or in your business by day. And may

God grant, when you and I shall come to the end of this year, we may have a good tale to tell concerning the faithfulness of God in having answered our prayers, and having fulfilled his promise.

I would now this day crave a part in your prayers. My dear friends, I am confident that God will perfect that which concerneth me. There has been a work done in this place, and God has blessed the congregation; but the work is not perfect yet. It is not enough to rouse other ministers to preach the word. I hope I shall never, while I live, cease to have another project always in hand. When one thing is done, we will do something else. If we have tried to make ministers more diligent in preaching, we must try to make the churches more earnest in praying. When we have built our new chapel, we must build something else; we must always have something in hand. If I have preached the Gospel in England, it must be my privilege to preach it across the sea yet; and when I have preached it there, I must solicit longer leave of absence that I may preach it in other countries, and act as a missionary throughout the nations. I am confident that God will perfect that which concerneth me; I rely on that. Do I therefore say that you need not pray? Oh, no. Pray that he would not forsake the work of his own hands. This work is not of our own hands. This labour of love is not mine, but God's. I have done nothing, except as the instrument; he has done it all. Oh, my dear friends, you that love me, as a brother in Christ, and as your pastor in the church, go home and plead with God for me this day and henceforth, that he would not forsake his work; but that the fire which has been kindled here may run along the ground, till all England shall be in a blaze with a revival of grace and godliness. Be not content to warm your hands at the sparks of this fire. Ask that the breath of God's Spirit may blow the sparks across the sea, that other lands may catch the flames, till the whole earth burning as a holocaust to heaven, shall be accepted as whole burnt offering before the throne of God Most High.

“May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and cause his face to shine upon you and lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace,” and unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, shall be glory for ever!

Perfection in Faith

A Sermon

(No. 232)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, January 2nd, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”—Hebrews 10:14.

THINK OF THIS MORNING’S TEXT—“The Lord WILL perfect that which concerneth me.”

Is it not very grateful to observe, that what is just in one part of Scripture presented to us as a matter of *faith*, is in another place states as a matter of *fact*? Think of this evening’s text—“He HATH perfected us for ever.” This morning we went downwards, from faith to prayer. After having said in confidence, “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me,” we meekly besought him—“Forsake not the works of thine own hands,”—sinking as it were to a lower note in the scale of music. Then we beheld Perfection in the dim obscurity of the future, like the sun veiled behind a cloud. Our faith rested on it as a thing at present unseen, our hearts yearned after it as an inheritance yet in reserve for us. Now to-night, this perfection is brought nigh to us, I thing accomplished, as an ever-present fact, whose eternal reality shines upon us with unclouded lustre. It is thus I read this verse—“By one offering our Lord Jesus Christ HATH perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

I have been turning this text over, and over, and over in my mind, and praying about it, and looking into it, and seeking illumination from the Holy Spirit; but I was a long time before I could be clear about its exact meaning. It is very easy to select a meaning, and then to say, that is what the text means, and very easy also to look at something which lies upon the surface; but I am not quite so sure that after several hours of meditation any brother would be able to ascertain what is the Spirit’s mind in this particular verse, “By one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” When I was trying to find out what this meant, I thought I would read the chapters before it, and if I should happen to find out any word that should seem to be the key to this verse, I would then under the Spirit’s guidance, seek to open this lock and mystery with the pick-lock which was there furnished to me. Well, I read the chapters, and I did find out a word which seemed to me to explain the whole of this verse. You must have patience with me, while I try to show you what I think it means; and then I think it will stand out in a very clear and glorious light.

First, *the condition of the child of God—what he is*. He is a sanctified person “Them that are sanctified.” Secondly, *what Christ has done for him*: “He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

I. First, then, THE CHILDREN OF GOD ARE HERE INTENDED, UNDER THE TERM “SANCTIFIED;” they are described as sanctified persons. What does this mean? We usually say there are two meanings to the term “sanctified.” One is, “*set apart*.” God has set apart his people from before the foundation of the world, to be his chosen and peculiar inheritance. We are sanctified by God the Father. There is a second signification, which implies not the decree of the Father, but the work of the Holy Spirit. We are sanctified in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit when he subdues our corruptions, imparts to us graces, and leads us onward in the divine walk and life of faith. But

the word here, I think, includes both of these senses; and I must try if I can to find a figure which will embrace them both. And what is the apostle speaking about? In the ninth chapter he is speaking about the tabernacle, and the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread, and the sanctuary, and the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, and the pot of manna; he is talking about priests, and about priestly things, and holy things; and he is declaring that all these things of which he speaks were sanctified things, but that though they were sanctified things, they wanted to be made perfect by the sprinkling of blood. Now, I believe, the sanctification of our text is to be understood in this sense. There were certain golden vessels that were used in the sanctuary which were never used for anything else but for the service of God. They were set apart, they were made holy, and they were kept strictly to be the vessels of the sanctuary of the Lord God. *They* were sanctified things. Again, in the sanctuary there were persons who did nothing else but wait upon the Lord. These were consecrated to their offices; for God chose the tribe of Levi, and out of the tribe of Levi he chose the house of Aaron. These persons were chosen, and then they were prepared. They underwent certain ceremonies, and divers washings, and so they were made ceremonially holy; and these priests were therefore sanctified persons, because they were set apart, dedicated and reserved to the special service of the Lord God. Now, brethren, that is just what you and I are, and what we ought to be. We are sanctified persons: that is to say, we are chosen by God to be the peculiar vessels which he will use in pouring out his mercy, and to be the special priests whom he shall employ in his divine worship in this world. No man had any right to take wine for his own drinking, and drink it out of the golden cups of the sanctuary. If he did so, he did it to his own destruction—witness Belshazzar. He took the cups, and the golden candlesticks, and so forth, and used them in his debaucheries, and lo! he was swept away, and the handwriting on the wall foretold his doom. Even so, beloved brethren, Christian men are not to be used for anything but for God. They are a set-apart people; they are vessels of mercy, they are not for the devil's use, not for their own use, not for the world's use, but for their Master's use. He has made them on purpose to be used entirely, solely and wholly for him. Now, that is what is meant in this text by "sanctified." We are sanctified persons, set apart for God's use, consecrated, just as the vessels, the cups, the candlesticks, and the tables, and the altars of the sanctuary, were sanctified unto God and set apart for his service; and I said, we that are priests are sanctified persons, not because of any holiness in our character, seeing there were some of them that were not holy in their character. My text does not touch character—it touches position in the sight of God. We are not perfect in character, any one of us—we are only perfect in position. There were two men who officiated as priests before God, namely the sons of Eli, who committed sin and iniquity before God; and yet they were set apart for God's service, mark you; and when they offered the sacrifices as priests, because they had been washed with water and sprinkled with blood, they were officially accepted as being sanctified persons. Now, brethren, the children of God are sanctified persons, to offer spiritual sacrifices unto God through Jesus Christ, and we have no right to do anything else but serve God. "What!" say you, "have not I to attend to my business?" Yes, and serve God in your business. "Am I not to look after my family?" Assuredly you are, and serve God in your family, but still you are to be a set-apart person; you are not to wear the white robe nor the breastplate, but still you are to think of yourself as being as much a priest as if the breastplate were on your breast, and the white robe about your loins; for ye are priests unto God and his Father. He hath made you a peculiar generation, a royal priesthood, and hath set you apart for himself.

Now, I think that this first head of my sermon gives you an inkling of what the rest must mean. I have already hinted at what I think is the sense of the text. I have explained, I suppose, clearly enough in what sense God's people are a sanctified people, as understood in this verse. They are chosen and set apart and reserved to be God's instruments and God's servants, and thus they are sanctified.

II. Now comes the second thing: IN WHAT SENSE ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THAT CHRIST HAS PERFECTED THESE THAT ARE SANCTIFIED? Why, just this: When the golden vessels were brought into the temple or into the sanctuary, they were sanctified the very first moment that they were dedicated to God. No one dared to employ them for anything but holy uses. But they were not perfect. What did they need, then to make them perfect? Why, to have blood sprinkled on them; and, as soon as the blood was sprinkled on them, those golden vessels were perfect vessels, officially perfect. God accepted them as being holy and perfect things, and they stood in his sight as instruments of an acceptable worship. Just so was it with the Levites and the priests. As soon as ever they were set apart to their office; as soon as ever they were born, in fact, they were consecrated, they belonged to God; they were his peculiar priesthood. But they were not perfect until they had passed through divers washings, and had the blood sprinkled upon them. Then God looked upon them in their official priestly character, as being perfect persons. They were not perfect in character, I repeat, they were only perfect officially; perfect in the sight of God; and they stood before him to offer sacrifice as acceptably, as if they had been pure as Adam himself. Now, then, how does this refer to us, and what is the meaning of this text, that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified?" Turn back a moment or two. You will find in the 9th chapter of the Hebrews, at the 6th verse, "Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." Mark here. The first meaning of my text is this. The child of God is a priest, and as a priest he is sanctified to enter within the vail. He is now permitted to go into the place which was once within the vail, but which is not so now, because the vail is rent in twain; but the high priest could not go within the vail, because he was not perfect; he had to be sprinkled with the blood, and that made him officially perfect. It would not make him perfect merely to put on the breast-plate, or to wear the ephod; he was not perfect till the blood had been sprinkled upon him, and then he went within the vail. But when next year came round he was not fit to go within the vail till blood was sprinkled on him again; and the next year, though he was always a sanctified man, he was not always, officially, a perfect man. He had to be sprinkled with blood again. And so, year after year, the high priest who went within the vail, needed afresh to be made perfect, in order that he might obtain access to God.

Here is one sense of the text. The apostle says that we who are the priests of God have a right as priests to go to God's mercy-seat that is within the vail; but it were to our death to go there unless we were perfect. But we *are* perfect, for the blood of Christ has been sprinkled on us, and, therefore, our standing before God is the standing of perfection. Our standing, in our own conscience, is imperfection, just as the character of the priest might be imperfect. But that has nothing to do with it. Our standing in the sight of God is a standing of perfection; and when he sees the blood, as of old the destroying angel passed over Israel, so this day, when he sees the blood, God passes over our sins, and accepts us at the throne of his mercy, as if we were perfect. Therefore, brethren, let us come boldly; let us "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts

sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” The apostle brings in, in the twenty-second verse of this tenth chapter, one inference which I have just drawn from my text. In having access to God, perfection is absolutely necessary. God cannot talk with an imperfect being. He could talk with Adam in the garden but he could not talk with you or with me, even in paradise itself, as imperfect creatures. How, then, am I to have fellowship with God, and access to his throne? Why, simply thus:—“The blood of Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” and consequently we have access with boldness to the throne of the heavenly grace, and may come boldly in all our time of need. And what is better still, we are always perfect, always fit to come to the throne, whatever our doubts, whatever our sins. I say not this of the priest’s character. We have nothing to do with that at present. We come before God in our station, not in our character, and therefore, we may come as perfect men at all times, knowing that God seeth no sin in Jacob, and no iniquity in Israel; for in this sense Christ hath perfected for ever, every consecrated vessel of his mercy. Oh! is not this a delightful thought, that when I come before the throne of God, I feel myself a sinner, but God does not look upon me as one? When I approach him to offer my thanksgivings, I feel that I am unworthy in myself; but I am not unworthy in that official standing in which he has placed me. As a sanctified and perfected thing in Christ, I have the blood upon me; God regards me in my sacrifice, in my worship, ay, and in myself, too as being perfect.

Oh how joyful this is! And there is no need a second time to repeat this perfecting. It is an everlasting perfection; it allows a constant access to the throne of the heavenly grace. That is one meaning of the text.

Again, a little further on, our apostle, in the 9th chapter of the Hebrews, says, at the 21st verse, “He sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry,” They were all sanctified vessels, you know, but they were not perfect vessels till they were sprinkled with the blood. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these,” and so forth. Now, beloved, the vessels of the sanctuary, as I have said, were sanctified the moment they were put there, but they were not perfect; God could not therefore accept any sacrifice that was touched with the golden tongs or that lay upon the brazen altar, so long as those golden tongs and the brazen altar were imperfect. What was done to make them perfect? Why, they were sprinkled with blood; but they had to be sprinkled with blood ever so many times—once, twice, thrice, multitudes of times, because continually they wanted making perfect. Now you and I are this day, if we are consecrated persons, like the vessels of the sanctuary. Sometimes we are like the censer—God fills us with joy, and then the smoke of incense ascends from us; sometimes we are like the slaughter-knife that the priests used; we are enabled to deny our lusts, to deny ourselves, and put the knife to the neck of the victim, and sometimes we are like the altar, and upon us God is pleased to lay a sacrifice of labour, and there it smokes acceptably to heaven. We are made like sanctified things of his house. But, beloved, we, though we are sanctified, and he has chosen us to be the vessels of his spiritual temple, are not perfect till the blood is on us. Yet blessed be his name, that blood has once been put upon us, and we are perfected for ever. Is it not delightful to think that when God uses us in his service he could not use unhallowed instruments? The Lord God is so pure that he could not use anything but a perfect tool to work with. “Then surely he could never use me or use you.” Nay, but don’t you see, the blood is on us, and we are the sanctified instruments of his grace; and moreover,

we are the perfect instruments of his grace through the blood of Jesus. Oh! I delight to think that although in preaching the gospel I am in my own estimation and in yours rightly enough, imperfect; yet when God makes use of me in conversion, he does not make use of an imperfect man; no, he looks upon me in Christ as being perfect in Him, and then he says, "I can use this tool; I could not put my hand to an unholy thing, but I will look upon him as being perfected for ever in Christ, and therefore I can use him. Oh! Christian, do try to digest this precious thought: it has indeed been precious to my soul since I first laid hold upon it. You cannot tell what God may do with you, because if he uses you at all he does not use you as a sinner—he uses you as a sanctified person; nay more, as a perfect person. I will repeat it; I do not see how a holy God could use an unholy instrument; but he puts the blood on us, and then he makes us perfect—perfects us for ever, and then he uses us. And so I see the work of God tarried on by men whom we think are imperfect; but I never see God doing any of his deeds except with a perfect instrument; and if you ask me how he has done it, I tell you that all his consecrated ones, all whom he has sanctified to his use, he has first of all perfected for ever through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

And now we will have use more thought, and then I shall have given you the full meaning of the text. In the seventh chapter, the nineteenth verse, there is a word that is a key to the meaning of my text, and that helped me all through it; and I will give you the key now. "For the law made nothing *perfect*, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*, by the which we draw nigh unto God." Then with this, compare the tenth chapter and first verse, "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year, continually make the comers thereunto *perfect*." There is the word "perfect;" and we have got it in the text; "for then," says he, if they had been perfect, "would they not have ceased to be offered." Why offer any more, if you are a perfect man? "If the sacrifice made is perfect, the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sin." Now mark. The Jewish sacrifice was never intended to make the Jews' moral character any better, and it did not; it had no effect upon what we call his sanctification; all the sacrifice dealt with was his justification, and the perfection would be sought after; the perfection is not of sanctification, which the Arminian talks about, but the perfection of official standing, as he stood justified before God. Now that is the meaning of the word "perfect" here. It does not mean that the sacrifice did not make the man perfectly holy, and perfectly moral, and so forth; the sacrifice had no tendency to do that; it was quite another matter. It means that it did not perfectly make him justified in his own conscience and in the sight of God, because he had to come and offer again. Now, here comes a man who is troubled in his conscience. He comes sighing up the temple, and he must speak to the priest. He says to the priest, "I have committed such-and-such a sin." "Ah!" says the priest, "You will never have any ease to your conscience unless you bring a sin offering. He brings a sin offering, and it is offered, and the man sees it burn and goes away. He has got faith—faith in the great sin offering that is to come—and his conscience is easy. A day or two after, the same feelings arise; and what does he do? he goes to the priest again. "Ah!" says the priest, "you must bring another offering; you must bring a trespass offering." He does that, and his conscience grows easier for a time; but the more his conscience gets quickened, the more he sees the unsatisfactory character of the offering he brings. At last, he says, "I am so uneasy; oh! that I could have a sacrifice every hour! For do you know," says he, "while I can put my hand on the head of the victim, I feel so happy: when I come to see it slaughtered, and the blood flowing, I feel so easy; but I do not feel perfect. I will even go up to the temple," he says, "that there I may live." He sees a lamb slaughtered in the

morning, and tears of joy are in his eye. "Oh!" says he "I have seen that lamb; and when I saw the blood of that lamb flowing, I felt so rejoiced," Noon comes. "Ah!" says he, "my sins arise again; I have got a conscience, and where can I get relief for it?" And off he went to the temple; and there was another lamb in the evening, because God well knew that the sacrifices were themselves imperfect, only a shadow of the great substance, and that his people would need to have the service renewed, not only every year, but every day; nay, every morning and every evening.

But now, beloved, behold the glory of Christ Jesus as revealed to us in our text. "Those sacrifices could not make the comers thereunto perfect." They could not feel in their own conscience that they were perfectly justified, and they wanted fresh offerings; but here to-day I see the slaughtered Lamb on Calvary, and it was but yesterday I rejoiced in him, and I can rejoice in him again to-day. Years ago I sought him and I found him. I do not want another Lamb; I do not want another sacrifice. I can still see that blood flowing, and I can feel continually that I have no more conscience of sin. The sins are gone; I have no more remembrance of them; I am purged from them: and as I see the perpetual flowing blood of Calvary, and the ever rising merits of his glorious passion, I am compelled to rejoice in this fact, that he hath perfected for ever me—made me completely perfect through his sacrifice.

And now, Christian, try and lay hold upon this meaning of the text. Christ has made your conscience at ease for ever; and if it disturbs you, recollect it has no cause to do so, if you are a believer in Christ; for hath not he given you that which will put away all conscience of sin? Oh! rejoice! It has purged you so entirely that you may sit down and rest. You may sing with the poet—

"Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty.
Trust in his efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee."

Look at the text. Once again I am going to say the same things, lest I should not be quite understood. Dear brethren, we could not have access to God, unless on the footing of perfection; for God cannot walk and talk with imperfect creatures. But we are perfect; not in character, mark, for we are still sinners; but we are perfected through the blood of Jesus Christ, so that God can allow us to have access to him as perfected creatures. We may come boldly, because being sprinkled with the blood, God does not look on us as unholy and unclean, otherwise he could not allow us to come to his mercy seat; but he looks upon us as being perfected for ever through the one sacrifice of Christ. That is one thing. The other was this. We are the vessels of God's temple; he has chosen us to be like the golden pots of his sanctuary; but God could not accept a worship which was offered to him in unholy vessels. Those vessels, therefore, were made perfect by being sprinkled with blood. God could not accept the praise which comes from your unholy heart; he could not accept the song which springs from your uncircumcised lips, nor the faith which arises from your doubting soul, unless he had taken the great precaution to sprinkle you with the blood of Christ; and now, whatever he uses you for, he uses you as a perfect instrument, regarding you as being perfect in Christ Jesus. That, again, is the meaning of the text, and the same meaning, only a different phase of it. And, the last meaning is, that the sacrifices of the Jews did not give believing Jews peace of conscience for any length of time; they had to come again, and again, and again, because they felt that those sacrifices did not present to them a perfect justification before God. But behold, beloved, you and

I are complete in Jesus. We have no need of any other sacrifice. All others we disclaim. He hath perfected us for ever. We may set our conscience at ease, because we are truly, really, and everlastingly accepted in him. "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Now, what have I to do, but to turn to you and ask this one question, and I have done. Are you a sanctified person? I have known a man say sometimes to a believer, "Well, you look so sanctified: ah! you are one of those sanctified fellows." Well, if they said so to me, I should say, "I wish you would prove it." What can be a more holy thing than to be a sanctified man? and what a more happy thing! Let me ask you, then, are you sanctified? Says one, "I feel so sinful." That I do not ask you: I ask you whether you are set apart to God's service. Can you say,

"Dear Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do?"

Take me just as I am, and make use of me; I desire to be wholly thine? Do you feel that for you to live is Christ; that there is not any object you are living for but Christ—that Christ is the great aim of your ambition, the great object of all your labours; that you are like Samson, a Nazarite, consecrated to God? Oh! then, remember that you are perfected in Christ. But, my hearer, if thou art not sanctified to God in this sense, if thou livest to thyself, to pleasure, and to the world, thou art not perfected in Christ, and what is to become of thee? God will give thee no access to him; God will not use thee in his service; thou hast no rest in thy conscience, and in the day when God shall come to separate the precious from the vile, he will say, "Those are my precious ones, who have the blood on them; but these have rejected Christ, they have lived to themselves, they were dead while they lived, and they are damned now they are dead." Take heed of that! May God give you grace to be sanctified to God, and then shall you be for ever perfected through Christ.

Free Grace

A Sermon

(No. 233)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 9th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.”—Ezekiel 36:32.

There are two sins of man that are bred in the bone, and that continually come out in the flesh. One is self-dependence and the other is self-exaltation. It is very hard, even for the best of men, to keep themselves from the first error. The holiest of Christians, and those who understand best the gospel of Christ, find in themselves a constant inclination to look to the power of the creature, instead of looking to the power of God and the power of God alone. Over and over again, Holy Scripture has to remind us of that which we never ought to forget, that salvation is God's work from first to last, and is not of man, neither by man. But so it is, this old error—that we are to save ourselves, or that we are to do something in the matter of salvation—always rises up, and we find ourselves continually tempted by it to step aside from the simplicity of our faith in the power of the Lord our God. Why, even Abraham himself was not free from the great error of relying upon his own strength. God had promised to him that He would give him a son—Isaac, the child of promise. Abraham believed it, but at last, weary with waiting, he adopted the carnal expedient of taking to himself Hagar, to wife, and he fancied that Ishmael would most certainly be the fulfillment of God's promise; but instead of Ishmael's helping to fulfill the promise, he brought sorrow unto Abraham's heart, for God would not have it that Ishmael should dwell with Isaac. “Cast out,” said the Scripture, “the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.” Now we, in the matter of salvation, are apt to think that God is tarrying long in the fulfillment of His promise, and we set to work ourselves to do something, and what do we do? sink ourselves deeper in the mire and pile up for ourselves a store of future troubles and trials. Do we not read that it grieved Abraham's heart to send Ishmael away? Ah! and many a Christian has been grieved by those works of nature which he accomplished with the design of helping the God of grace. Oh, beloved, we shall find ourselves very frequently attempting the foolish task of assisting Omnipotence and teaching the Omniscient One. Instead of looking to grace alone to sanctify us, we find ourselves adopting Philosophic rules and principles which we think will effect the Divine work. We shall but mar it; we shall bring grief into our own spirits. But if, instead thereof, we in every work look up to the God of our salvation for help, and strength, and grace, and succor, then our work will proceed to our own joy and comfort, and to God's glory. That error, then, I say is in our bone, and will always dwell with us, and hence it is that the words of the text are put as an antidote against that error. It is distinctly stated in our text that salvation is of God. “Not for your sakes do *I* this.” He says nothing about what we have done or can do. All the preceding and all the succeeding verses speak of what God does. “*I* will take you from among the heathen.” “*I* will sprinkle clean water upon you.” “*I* will give you a new heart.” “*I* will put my

Spirit within you.” It is all of God: therefore, again recall to our recollection this doctrine, and give up all dependence upon our own strength and power.

The other error to which man is very prone, is that of relying upon his own merit. Though there is no righteousness in any man, yet in every man there is a proneness to truth in some fancied merit. Strange that it should be so, but the most reprobate characters have yet some virtue as they imagine, upon which they rely. You will find the most abandoned drunkard pride himself that he is not a swearer. You will find the blaspheming drunkard pride himself that at least he is honest. You will find men with no other virtue in the world, exalt what they imagine to be a virtue—the fact that they do not profess to have any; and they think themselves to be extremely excellent, because they have honesty or rather impudence enough to confess that they are utterly vile. Somehow the human mind clings to human merit; it always will hold to it, and when you take away everything upon which you think it could rely, in less than a moment it fashions some other ground for confidence out of itself. Human nature with regard to its own merit, is like the spider, it bears its support in its own bowels, and it seems as if it would keep spinning on to all eternity. You may brush down one web, but it soon forms another, you may take the thread from one place, and you will find it clinging to your finger, and when you seek to brush it down with one hand you find it clinging to the other. It is hard to get rid of; it is ever ready to spin its web and bind itself to some false ground of trust. It is against all human merit that I am this morning going to speak, and I feel that I shall offend a great many people here. I am about to preach a doctrine that is gall and vinegar to flesh and blood, one that will make righteous moralists gnash their teeth, and make others go away and declare that I am an Antinomian, and perhaps scarcely fit to live. However, that consequence is one which I shall not greatly deplore, if connected with it there should be in other hearts a yielding to this glorious truth, and a giving up to the power and grace of God, who will never save us, unless we are prepared to let Him have all the glory.

First, I shall endeavor to *expound at large the doctrine contained in this text*; in the next place I shall endeavour to *show its force and truthfulness*; and then in the third place I shall seek God's Holy Spirit to *apply the useful, practical lessons which are to be drawn from it*.

I. I shall endeavour to EXPOUND THIS TEXT. “Not for your sakes do I this saith the Lord God.” The motive for the salvation of the human race is to be found in the breast of God, and not in the character or condition of man. Two races have revolted against God—the one angelic, the other human. When a part of this angelic race revolted against the Most High, justice speedily overtook them; they were swept from their starry seats in Heaven, and henceforth they have been reserved in darkness unto the great day of the wrath of God. No mercy was ever presented to them, no sacrifice ever offered for them; but they were without hope and mercy, forever consigned to the pit of eternal torment. The human race, far inferior in order of intelligence, sinned as atrociously; at any rate, if the sins of manhood that we have heard of be put together and rightly weighed, I can scarcely understand how even the sins of devils could be much blacker than the sin of mankind. However, the God who in His infinite justice passed over angels, and suffered them forever to expiate their offences in the fires of hell, was pleased to look down on man. Here was election on a grand scale; the election of manhood, and the reprobation of fallen angelhood. What was the reason for it? The reason was in God's mind, an inscrutable reason which we do not know, and which if we knew probably we could not understand. Had you and I been put upon the choice of which should have been spared, I do think it probable we should have chosen that fallen angels should have been saved. Are they not the brightest? Have they not the greatest mental strength? If

they had been redeemed, would it not have glorified God more, as we judge, than the salvation of worms like ourselves? Those bright beings—Lucifer, son of the morning, and those stars that walked in his train—if they had been washed in His redeeming blood, if they had been saved by sovereign mercy, what a song would they have lifted up to the Most High and everlasting God! But God, who doeth as He wills with His own, and giveth no account of His matters, but who deals with His creatures as the potter deals with his clay, took not upon Him the nature of angels, but took upon Him the seed of Abraham, and chose men to be the vessels of His mercy. This fact we know, but where is its reason? certainly not in man. “Not for your sakes do I this. O house of Israel, be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways.”

Here, very few men object. We notice that if we talk about the election of men and the non-election of fallen angels, there is not a cavil for a moment. Every man approves of Calvinism till he feels that he is the loser by it; but when it begins to touch his own bone and his own flesh then he kicks against it. Come, then, we must go further. The only reason why one man is saved, and not another, lies not, in any sense, in the man saved, but in God's bosom. The reason why this day the gospel is preached to you and not the heathen far away, is not because, as a race, we are superior to the heathen; it is not because we deserve more at God's hands; His choice of Britain, in the election of outward privilege, is not caused by the excellency of the British nation, but entirely because of His own mercy and His own love. There is not reason in us why we should have the gospel preached to us more than any other nation. Today, some of us have received the gospel, and have been changed by it, and have become the heirs of light and immortality, whereas others are left still to be the heirs of wrath. But there is no reason in us why we should have been taken and others left.

“There was nothing in us to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight.
'Twas 'Even so, Father!' we ever must sing,
Because it seem'd good in thy sight.”

And now, let us review this doctrine at length. We are taught in Holy Scripture that, long before this world was made, God foreknew and foresaw all the creatures He intended to fashion; and there and then foreseeing that the human race would fall into sin, and deserve His anger, determined, in His own sovereign mind, that an immense portion of the human race should be His children, and should be brought to Heaven. As to the rest, He left them to their own deserts. to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind, to scatter crime and inherit punishment. Now, in the great decree of election, the only reason why God selected the vessels of mercy must have been because He would do it. There was nothing in any one of them which caused God to choose them. We all were alike, all lost, all ruined by the fall; all without the slightest claim upon His mercy; all, in fact, deserving His utmost vengeance. His choice of any one, and His choice of all His people, are causeless, so far as anything in them was concerned. It was the effect of His sovereign will, and of nothing which they did, could do, or even would do; for thus saith the text: “Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel!”

As for the fruit of our election, in due time Christ came into this world, and purchased with His blood all those whom the Father hath chosen. Now come ye to the cross of Christ; bring this doctrine with you, and remember that the only reason why Christ gave up His life to be a ransom for His sheep was because He loved His people, but there was nothing in His people that made Him die for them. I was thinking as I came here this morning, if any man should imagine that the love of

God to us was caused by anything in us, it would be as if a man should look into a well to find the springs of the ocean, or dig into an anthill to find an Alp. The love of God is so immense, so boundless and so infinite, that you cannot conceive for a moment that it could have been caused by anything in us. The little good that is in us—the no good that is in us—for there is none, could not have caused the boundless, bottomless, shoreless, summitless love which God manifests to His people. Stand at the foot of the cross, ye merit-mongers, ye that delight in your own works; and answer this question: Do you think that the Lord of life and glory could have been brought down from Heaven, could have been fashioned like a man, and have been led to die through any merit of yours? Shall these sacred veins be opened with any lancet less sharp than His own infinite love? Do you conceive that your poor merits, such as they are, could be so efficacious as to nail the Redeemer to the tree, and make Him bend His shoulders beneath the enormous load of the world's guilt? You cannot imagine it. The consequence is so great, compared with what you suppose to be the case, that your logic fails in a moment. You may conceive that a coral insect rears a rock by its multitude, and by its many years of working; but you cannot conceive that all the accumulated merits of manhood, if there were such things, could have brought the Eternal from the throne of His majesty, and bowed Him to the death of the cross: that is a thing as clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind, as impossibility can be. No; from the cross comes the cry—"Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel."

After Christ's death, there comes, in *the next place, the work of the Holy Spirit*. Those whom the Father hath chosen, and whom the Son has redeemed, in due time the Holy Spirit calls "out of darkness into marvelous light." Now, the calling of the Holy Spirit is without any regard to any, merit in us. If this day the Holy Spirit shall call out of this congregation a hundred men, and bring them out of their estate of sin into a state of righteousness, you shall bring these hundred men, and let them march in review, and if you could read their hearts, you would be compelled to say, "I see no reason why the Spirit of God should have operated upon these. I see nothing whatever that could have merited such grace as this—nothing that could have caused the operations and motions of the Spirit to work in these men." For, look ye here. By nature, men are said to be dead in sin. If the Holy Spirit quickens, it cannot be because of any power in the dead men, or any merit in them, for they are dead, corrupt and rotten in the grave of their sin. If then, the Holy Spirit says, "Come forth and live," it is not because of anything in the dry bones, it must be for some reason in His own mind, but not in us. Therefore, know ye this, men and brethren, that we all stand upon a level. We have none of us anything that can recommend us to God; and if the Spirit shall choose to operate in our hearts unto salvation, He must be moved to do it by His own supreme love, for He cannot be moved to do it by any good will, good desire, or good deed, that dwells in us by nature.

To go a little further: this truth, which holds good so far, *holds good all the way*. God's people, after they are called by grace, are preserved in Christ Jesus; they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" they are not suffered to sin away their eternal inheritance, but as temptations arise they have strength given with which to encounter them, and as sin blackens them they are washed afresh, and again cleansed. But mark, the reason why God keeps His people is the same as that which made them His people—His own free sovereign grace. If, my brother, you have been delivered in the hour of temptation, pause and remember that you were not delivered for your own sake. There was nothing in you that deserved the deliverance. If you have been fed and supplied in your hour of need, it is not because you have been a faithful servant of God, nor because you have been a prayerful Christian; it is simply and only because of God's mercy. He is not moved to

anything He does for you by anything .that you do for Him; His motive for blessing you lies wholly and entirely in the depths of His own bosom. Blessed be God, His people shall be kept.

“Nor death, nor Hell shall e’er remove
His favourites from His breast;
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest.”

But why? Because they are holy? Because they are sanctified? Because they serve God with good works? No, but because he in his sovereign grace has loved them, does love them, and will love them, even to the end.

And to conclude my exposition of this text. This shall hold good in Heaven itself. The day is coming when every blood-bought, blood-washed child of God shall walk the golden streets arrayed in white. Our hands shall soon bear the palm; our ears shall be delighted with celestial melodies, and our eyes filled with the transporting visions of God’s glory. But mark, the only reason why God shall bring us to Heaven shall be His own love, and not because we deserved it. We must fight the fight, but we do not win the victory because we fight it; we must labour, but the wage at the days’ end shall be a wage of grace, and not a debt. We must honour God here, looking for the recompense of the reward; but that recompense will not be given on a legal ground, because we merited it, but given to us entirely because God had loved us, for no reason that was in us. When you and I and each of us shall enter Heaven, our song shall be, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory;” and that shall be true, it shall not be a mere exaggeration of gratitude. It shall be true; we shall be compelled to sing it, because we could not sing anything else. We shall feel that we did nothing, and that we were nothing, but that God did it all—that we had nothing in us to be the motive of his doing it, but that His motive lay in Himself; therefore unto Him shall be every particle of the honour forever and ever.

Now, this, I take it, is the meaning of the text; distasteful it is to the great majority, even of professing Christians in this age. It is a doctrine that requires a great deal of salt, or else few people will receive it. It is very unsavory to them. However, there It stands. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” His truth we must preach, and this we must proclaim. Salvation is “not of men, neither by man; not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood,” nor of birth, but of the sovereign will of God, and God alone.

II. And now, in the second place, I have to ILLUSTRATE AND ENFORCE THIS TEXT.

Consider a moment man’s character. It will humble us, and it will tend to confirm this truth in our minds. Let me take an illustration. I will consider man as a criminal. He certainly is such in the sight of God, and I shall not slander him. Suppose now that some great criminal is at last overtaken in his sin, and shut up in Newgate. He has committed high treason, murder, rebellion, and every possible iniquity. He has broken all the laws of the realm—every one of them. The public cry is everywhere—“This man must die; the laws cannot be maintained unless he shall be made an example of their rigour. He who beareth not the sword in vain must this time let the sword taste blood. The man must die; he richly deserves it.” You look through his character: you cannot see one solitary redeeming trait. He is an old offender; he has so long persevered in his iniquity that you are compelled to say, “The case is hopeless with this man; his crimes have such aggravation we cannot make an apology for him, even should we try. Not jesuitical cunning itself could devise any pretence of excuse, or any hope of a plea for this abandoned wretch; let him die!” Now, if her Majesty the Queen, having in her hands the sovereign power of life and death, chooses that this man shall not

die, but that he shall be spared, do you not see as plain as daylight, that the only reason that can move her to spare that man, must be her own love, her own compassion? For, as I have supposed already that there is nothing in that man's character that can be a plea for mercy, but that, contrariwise, his whole character cries aloud for vengeance against his sin. Whether we like it or not, this is just the truth concerning ourselves. This is just our character and position before God. Ah! my hearer, you may turn upon your heel, disgusted and offended; but there are some here who feel it to be solemnly true in their own experience, and they will therefore drink in the doctrine, for it is the only way whereby they can be saved. My hearer, your conscience perhaps is telling you this morning that you have sinned so heinously that there is not an inlet for a solitary ray of hope in your character. You have added to your sins this great one, that you have rebelled against the Most High wantonly and wickedly. If you have not committed all the sins in the calendar of crime, It has been because providence has stayed your hand, Your heart has been black enough for it all. You feel that the vileness of your imagination and desires has achieved the consummation of human guilt, and further you could not go. Your sins have prevailed against you, and have gone over your head. Now, man, the only ground upon which God can save you is His own love. He cannot save you because you deserve it, for you do not deserve it, because there is no excuse that might be made for your sin. No, you are without any excuse, and you feel it. Oh! bless His dear name, that He has devised this way, whereby He can save you upon the basis of His own sovereign love and unbounded grace, without anything in you. I want you to go back to Newgate again to this criminal. We suppose now that this criminal is visited by her Majesty in person. She goes to him, and she says to him, "Rebel, traitor, murderer, I have in my heart compassion for you; you deserve it not; but I am come this day to you, to tell you that if you repent you shall have mercy at my hands." Suppose this man, springing up, should curse her—curse this angel of mercy to her face, spit upon her, and utter blasphemies, and imprecate curses upon her head. She retires; she is gone; but so great is her compassion, that the next day she sends a messenger, and days, and weeks, and months, and years, she continually sends messengers, and these go to him, and they say, "If you will repent of your transgressions you shall have mercy; not because you deserve it, but because her Majesty is compassionate, and out of her gracious soul she desires your salvation. Will you repent?" Suppose this man should curse at the messenger, stop his ears against the message, spit upon him, tell him he does not care for him at all. Or to suppose a better case—suppose he turns upon his seat and says, "I don't care whether I am hanged or not; I'll take my chance along with other people; I shall take no notice of you." And suppose more than that, rising from his seat, he indulges again in all the crimes for which he has already been condemned, and plunges headlong afresh into the very sins which have brought his neck under the rope of the gallows. Now, if her Majesty would spare such a man as that, on what terms can she do it? You say, "Why, she cannot, unless she does it out of love; she cannot because of any merit in him, because such a beast as that ought to die." And now what are you and I by nature but like this? And my unconverted hearer, what is this but a picture of you? Has not God Himself visited your conscience? and has He not said to you, "Sinner! come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool." And what have you done? Stopped your ear against the voice of conscience—cursed and swore at God, blasphemed His holy name, despised His Word, and railed against His ministers. And this day, again, with tears in his eyes, a servant of God is come to you, and his message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved; 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." And what will you do. Why,

if left to yourselves you will laugh at the message—despise it. It will glance off from you like an arrow from a man that is girt about with mail, and you will go away to despise God again, as you have done before. Do you not see, then, that if God ever shall save you, it cannot be for your sakes; but must be from His own infinite love; it cannot be from any other reason, since you have rejected Christ, despised His gospel, trodden under foot the blood of Jesus, and have refused to be saved. If He saves you, it must be free grace, and free grace alone.

But now picture a little more about this criminal at Newgate. Not content with having added sin to sin, and having rejected mercy for himself, this wretch industriously employs himself in going round to all the cells where others are confined, and hardening their hearts also against the mercy of the Queen. He can scarce see a person but he begins to taint him with the blasphemy of his own heart; he utters injurious things against the majesty that spares him, and endeavours to make others as vile as himself. Now, what does justice say? If this man ought not to die on his own account, yet he ought to die for the sake of others; and if he be spared, is it not as plain as a pike—staff that he cannot be spared because of any reason in him? It must be because of the unconquerable compassion of the Sovereign. And now look you here: is not this the case of some here present? Not only do you sin yourselves, but lead others into sin? I know this was one of my plagues and torments, when first God brought me to Himself, that I have led others into temptation. Are there not men here that have taught others to swear? Are there not fathers here that have helped to destroy their own children's souls? Are there not some of you that are like the deadly Upas tree? You stretch out your branches, and from every leaf there drops poison upon those who come beneath its deadly range. Are there not some here who have seduced the virtuous, that have misled those who were seemingly pious, and that are perhaps so hardened that they even glory in it? Not content with being damned yourselves, you are seeking to lead others to the pit also. Thinking it not enough yourselves to be at enmity with God, you want to imitate Satan by dragging others with you. O my hearer, is not this thy case? Does not thy heart confess it? And does not the tear flow down thy cheek? Remember, then, this must be true: if God shall save thee, it must be because He will do it. It cannot be because there is anything good in thee, for thou deservedst now to die, and if He spare thee it must be sovereign love and sovereign grace.

I will just use one other illustration, and then, I think I shall have made the text clear enough. There is not so much difference between black and a darker shade of black as there is between pure white and black. Every one can see that. Then there is not so much difference between man and the devil as there is between God and man. God is perfection; we are black with sin. The devil is only a darker shade of black; and great as may be the difference between our sin and the sin of Satan, yet it is not so great as the difference between the perfection of God and the imperfection of man. Now, imagine for a minute that somewhere in Africa there should be a tribe of devils living, that you and I had it in our power to save these devils from some threatened wrath which must overtake them. If you or I should go there and die to save those devils, what could be our motive? From what we know of the character of a devil, the only motive that could make us do that must be love. There could not be any other. It must be simply because we had such big hearts that we could even embrace fiends within them. Well, now, there is not so much difference between man and the devil as between God and man. If, then, the only motive that could make men save a devil must be man's love, does it not follow with irresistible force, that the only motive that could lead God to save men must be God's own love. At any rate, if that reason be not cogent the fact is indisputable—"Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." God sees us, abandoned, evil,

wicked, and deserving His wrath; if He saves us, it is His boundless, fathomless love that leads Him to do it—nothing whatever in us.

III. And now, having thus preached this doctrine, and enforced it, I come to a very solemn PRACTICAL APPLICATION. And here may God the Holy Spirit help me labour with your hearts!

First, since this doctrine is true, how *humble* a Christian man ought to be. If thou be saved, thou hast had nought to do with it; God has done it. If thou be saved, thou hast not deserved it. It is mercy undeserved which thou hast received. I have sometimes been delighted when I have seen the gratitude of abandoned characters to any who have assisted them. I remember visiting a house of refuge. There was a poor girl there who had fallen into sin long, and when she found herself kindly addressed and recognized by society, and saw a Christian minister longing after her soul's good, it broke her heart. What should a man of God care about her? she was so vile. How could it be that a Christian should speak to her? Ah! but how much more should that feeling rise in our hearts? My God! I have rebelled against thee, and yet thou hast loved me, unworthy *me!* How can it be? I cannot lift myself up with pride, I must bow down before Thee in speechless gratitude. Remember, my dear brethren, that not only is the mercy which you and I have received undeserved, but it was *unasked*. It is true you prayed, but not till free grace made you pray. You would have been, to this day, hardened in heart, without God, and without Christ, had not free grace saved you. Can you be proud then?—proud of mercy which, if I may use the term, has been forced upon you?—proud of grace which has been given you against your will, until your will was changed by sovereign grace? And think again. All the mercy you have you once refused, Christ sups with you; be not proud of His company. Remember, there was a day when He knocked, and you refused—when He came to the door and said, “My head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night; open to me, my beloved;” and you barred it in His face and would not let Him enter. Be not proud, then, of what thou hast, when thou rememberest that thou didst once reject Him. Does God embrace Thee in His arms of love? Remember, once thou liftedst up thine hand of rebellion against Him. Is thy name written in His book? Ah! there was a time when, if it had been in thy power, thou wouldst have erased the sacred lines that contained thine own salvation. Can we, dare we, lift up our wicked head with pride, when all these things should make us hang our heads down in the deepest humility? That is one lesson: let us learn another.

This doctrine is true, and therefore it should be a subject of the greatest *gratitude*. When meditating upon this text yesterday, the effect it had upon me was one of transport and joy. Oh! I thought, upon what other condition could I have been saved? And I looked back upon my past estate; I saw myself piously trained and educated, but revolting against all that. I saw a mother's tears shed over me in vain, and a father's admonition lost upon me, and yet I found myself saved by grace, and I could only say, “Lord, I bless Thee that it is by grace, for if it had been by merit I had never been saved. If thou hadst waited till there was something good in me, thou wouldst have waited till I sank into the hopeless perdition of hell, for good in man there never would have been, unless thou hadst first put it there.” And then I thought immediately, “Oh! how I could go and preach that to the poor sinner!” Ah! let me try if I cannot. O sinner! you say you dare not come to Christ because you have nothing to recommend you. He does not want anything to recommend you; He will not save you, if you have anything to recommend you, for His says, “Not for you sake do I this.” Go to Christ with earrings in your ears, and jewels upon you; wash your face, and array yourself with gold and silver, and go before Him and say, “Lord, save me; I have washed myself and clothed myself; save me!” “Get you gone! Not for your sakes will I do this.” Go to Him again,

and say, "Lord, I have put a rope about my neck, and sackcloth about my loins; see how repentant I am, see how I feel my need; now save me!" "No," saith He, "I would not save you on account of your flaunting robes, and now I will not save you because of your rags; I will save you for nothing about you; if I do save you, it will be from something in my heart, not from anything you feel. Get ye gone!" But if today you go to Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, there is no reason in the world why I should be saved—there *is* one in Heaven; Lord, I cannot urge any plea, I deserve to be lost, I have no excuse to make for all my sins, no apology to offer; Lord, I deserve it, and there is nothing in me why I should be saved, for if thou wouldst save me I should make but a poor Christian, after all; I fear that my future works will be no honour to Thee—I wish they could be, but thy grace must make them good, else they will still be bad. But, Lord, thou I have nothing to bring, and nothing to say for myself, I do say this: I have heard that thou hast come into the world to save sinners—O Lord, save me!

'I the chief of sinners am.'

I confess I do not feel this as I ought, I do not mourn it as I ought; I have no repentance to recommend me; nay, Lord, I have no faith to recommend me either, for I do not believe thy promise as I ought; but oh! I cling to this text. Lord, thou hast said thou wilt not do it for my sake. I thank Thee thou hast said that. Thou couldst not do it for my sake, for I have no reason why thou shouldst. Lord, I claim thy gracious promise. 'Be merciful to me, a sinner.'" Ah! you good people, this doctrine does not suit some of you; it is too humbling, is it not? You that have kept your churches regularly, and been to meetings so piously, you that never broke the Sabbath, or never swore an oath, or did anything wrong, this does not suit you. You say it will do very well to preach to harlots, and drunkards, and swearers, but it will not suit such good people as we are. Ah! well, this is your text—"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You are "whole"—you are; you "need not a physician, but they that are sick." Go your way. Christ came to save such as you are. You think you can save yourselves. Do it, and perish in the doing of it. But I feel that the same gospel that suits a harlot suits me, and that that free grace which saved Saul of Tarsus must save me, else I am never saved. Come, let us all go together. We are all guilty—some more, some less, but all hopelessly guilty. Let us go together to the footstool of His mercy, and though we dare not look up, let us lie there in the dust, and sigh out again, "Lord have mercy upon us for whom Jesus died."

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Sinner, come now; come now, I beseech thee; I entreat thee, come now. O Spirit of the living God, draw them now! Let these feeble weak words be the means of drawing souls to Christ. Will you reject my Master again? Will you go out of this house hardened once more? You may never again have such feelings as those which are aroused in your soul. Come, now, receive His mercy; now bend your willing necks to His yoke; and then I know you shall go away to taste His faithful love, and at last to sing in Heaven the song of the redeemed—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory forever. Amen."

"O thou great eternal Jesus,
High and mighty Prince of Peace,
How Thy wonders shine resplendent,

In the wonders of Thy grace:
Thy rich gospel scorns conditions,
Breathes salvation free as air;
Only breathes triumphant mercy,
Baffling guilt, and all despair.
“O the grandeur of the gospel,
How it sounds the cleansing blood;
Shows the bowels of a Saviour,
Shows the tender heart of God.
Only treats of love eternal,
Swells the all-abounding grace,
Nothing knows but life and pardon,
Full redemption, endless peace.”

Corn in Egypt

A Sermon

(No. 234)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 16th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.”—Genesis 42:1, 2.

GOD in his wisdom hath so made the outward world, that it is a strange and wonderful picture of the inner world. Nature has an analogy with grace. The wonders that God does in the heart of man, each of them finds a parallel, a picture, a metaphor, an illustration, in the wonders which God performs in providence. It is the duty of the minister always to look for these analogies. Our Saviour did so. He is the model preacher: his preaching was made up of parables, pictures from the outer world, accommodated to teach great and mighty truths. And so is man's mind constituted that we can always see a thing better through a picture than anyhow else. If you tell a man a simple truth, he does not see it nearly so well as if you told it to him in an illustration. If I should attempt to describe the flight of a soul from sin to Christ, you would not see it one half so readily as if I should picture John Bunyan's pilgrim running out of the city of destruction, with his fingers in his ears, and hastening with all his might to the wicket gate. There is something tangible in a picture, a something which our poor flesh and blood can lay hold of; and therefore the mind, grasping through the flesh and the blood, is able to understand the idea, and to appropriate it. Hence the necessity and usefulness of the minister always endeavouring to illustrate his sermon, and to make his discourse as much as possible like the parables of Jesus Christ.

Now, there are very few minds that can make parables. The fact is, I do not know of but one good allegory in the English language, and that is, the “Pilgrim's Progress in Parables, pictures, and analogies are not so easy as some think; most men can understand them, but few can create them. Happy for us who are ministers of Christ, we have no great trouble about this matter; we have not to make parables; they are made for us. I believe that Old Testament history has for one of its designs the furnishing of the Christian minister with illustrations; so that a truth which I find in the New Testament in its naked form taught me as a doctrine, I find in the Old Testament cast into a parable. And so would we use this most excellent ancient book, the Old Testament, as an illustration of the New, and as a means of explaining to our minds the truth that is taught to us in a more doctrinal form in the New Testament.

What, then, do we see in these two verses of the forty-second chapter of Genesis? We have here a picture of man's lost estate, he is in a sore soul-devouring famine. We discover here man's hope. His hope lies in that Joseph whom he knows not, who has gone before him and provided all things necessary, that his wants may be supplied. And we have here practical advice, which was preeminently wise on the part of Jacob to his sons in his case, and which, being interpreted, is also the wisest advice to you and to me. Seeing that there is mercy for sinners, and that Jesus our brother has gone before us to provide for us an all-sufficient redemption, “why sit we here and look one

upon another?" There is mercy in the breast of God, there is salvation in Christ; "get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die."

Three things, then, this morning: first, *a pitiful plight*; secondly, *good news*; and thirdly, *excellent advice*.

I. First, A PITIFUL PLIGHT. These sons of Jacob were overtaken by a famine. We may talk of famines, friends, but none of us know what they are. We have heard of a famine in Ireland, and some dreadful stories have been related to us that have harrowed our hearts and almost made our hair stand up on end; but even there the full fury of famine was not known. We have heard too, to our great grief, that there are still in this city, dark and hideous spots, where men and women are absolutely perishing from hunger, who have sold from off their backs the last rags that covered them, and are now unable to leave the house, and positively perishing of famine. Such cases we have seen in our daily journals, and our hearts have been sick to think that such things should now occur. But we cannot any of us guess what is the terror of an universal famine, when all men are poor, because all men lack bread, when gold and silver are as valueless as the stones of the street, because mountains of silver and gold would scarce suffice to buy a single sheaf of wheat. Read the history of the famine of Samaria, and see the dreadful shifts to which women were driven, when they did even eat their own offspring. Famines are hells on earth. The famine which had overtaken Jacob was one which, if it had not at the moment of which this passage speaks, exactly arrived at that dreadful pitch, was sure to come to it; for the famine was to last for seven years; and if, through the spendthrift character of Eastern nations, they had not saved in the seven years of plenty enough even for one year, what would become of them during the sixth or seventh year of famine? This was the state of Jacob's family. They were cast into a waste, howling wilderness of famine with but one oasis, and that oasis they did not hear of till just at the time to which our text refers, when they learned to their joy that there was corn in Egypt. Permit me now to illustrate the condition of the sinner by the position of these sons of Jacob.

First, the sons of Jacob had a *very great* need of bread. There was a family of sixty-six of them. We are apt, when we read these names of the sons of Jacob, to think they were all lads. Are you aware, that Benjamin, the youngest of them, was the father of ten children, at the time he went into Egypt, so that he was not so very small a lad at any rate, and all the rest had large families, so that there were sixty-six to be provided for. Well, a famine is frightful enough when there is one man who is starving—when there is one brought down to a skeleton through leanness and hunger: but when sixty-six mouths are craving for bread, that is indeed a horrible plight to be in. But what is this compared with the sinner's needs! His necessities are such that only Infinity can supply them; he has a demand before which the demands of sixty-six mouths are as nothing. He has before him the dreadful anticipation of a hell, from which there is no escape; he has upon him the heavy hand of God, who has condemned him on account of his sins. What needs he? Why, all the manna that came down from heaven in the wilderness would not supply a sinner's necessities, and all the water that gushed from the rock in the desert would not be sufficient to quench his thirst. Such is the need of the sinner, that all the handfull of Egypt's seven years would be lost upon him. He needs great mercy; the greatest of mercy, nay, he needs an infinity of mercy, and unless this be given him from above, he is worse than starved, for he dies the second death, and lives in eternal death, without the hope of annihilation or escape. The demands of a hungry man are great; but the demands of a hungry soul are greater still; until that soul gets the love and mercy of God manifested to it, it will always hunger and always thirst, though it had worlds given it for mouthfulls, its hungry stomach

would be still unsatisfied, for nothing but the Trinity can fill the heart of man; nothing but an assurance of the everlasting, immutable love of God, and an application of the most precious blood of Jesus, can ever stay the terrible hunger of the sinner's soul.

Mark, again: what these people wanted was an *essential thing*. They did not lack clothes, that were a want, but nothing like the lack of bread; for a man might exist with but scanty covering. They did not need luxuries,—these they might want, and our pity would not be so much excited; they did not need tents,—without these they might be able to satisfy the cravings of nature: but they lacked *bread*—that without the fire of life would dwindle to a spark, which at last must die out in the darkness of death. “Bread! bread!” what a cry is that, when men gather together, and in the days of scarcity make that their war-cry. “Bread! bread!” what is a more dreadful sound than that? “Fire! fire!” may be more alarming, but “Bread! bread!” is more piercing to the heart. The cry of “Fire!” rolls like thunder; but the cry of “Bread!” flashes like lightning, and withers one's soul. O that men should cry for bread,—the absolute necessary for the sustenance of the body! But what is the sinner's want? Is it not exactly this?—he wants that without which the soul must perish. Oh! sinner, if it were health, if it were wealth, if it were comfort, which thou wert seeking, then thou mightest sit down content, and say, “I can do without these,” but in this matter it is thy soul, thy never-dying soul, that is hungering, and it is its salvation, its rescue from the flames of hell, which now demands thy attention. Oh! what a need is that,—the need of the soul's salvation! Talk we of bread and of skeleton bodies? These are frightful things to look upon; but when we speak of a lack of bread, and of dying perishing souls, there is something more frightful here. See, then, your case, ye who are without the grace of God; ye have great necessity,—necessity for essential things.

Yet again; the necessity of the sons of Jacob was a *total one*. They had no bread; there was none to be procured. So long as they had some of their own, they could stint themselves, and diminish their rations, and so, by moderation, maintain themselves. But they looked into the future, and saw their children dying with hunger, and not one crust with which to palliate their pangs. They saw their wives sickening before them, and their babes at their breasts, unable to obtain nourishment from those dry fountains. They saw themselves at length, solitary, miserable men, with their hands on their loins, bundles of bones, crawling about the tents where their children lay dead, and themselves without strength enough to bury them. They had a total lack of bread. They might have borne with scarceness: but a total lack of bread was horrible in the extreme. Such is the sinner's case. It is not that he has a little grace, and lacks more; but he has none at all. Of himself he has no grace. It is not that he has a little goodness, and needs to be made better, but he has no goodness at all, no merits, no righteousness—nothing to bring to God, nothing to offer for his acceptance; he is penniless, povertystricken; everything is gone whereon his soul might feed. He may gnaw the dry bones of his own good works; but if the Lord hath sent conviction into his heart, he will gnaw them in vain; he may try to break the bones of ceremonies, but he shall find that instead of marrow they contain gall and bitterness. He may hunger and hunger, because he has positively nothing with which he could stay his stomach. Such is your case, then. How abject is such a necessity as this: a total lack of an essential thing for which you have an immense need.

But yet worse; with the exception of Egypt, the sons of Jacob were convinced that there was *no food anywhere*. I believe the reason why they looked one upon another was this. At first one looked at the other as much as to say, “Haven't you some to spare? Couldn't you give me some for my family?” Perhaps Dan appealed to Simeon, “Haven't you some? my child is starving this

day; cannot you help me?" Another might look at Judah; and perhaps they might fancy that Benjamin the favourite would surely have some morsel stored up. So they looked one to another. But soon alas! the look of hope changed into the look of despair. They were quite certain that the necessities of each house had been so great, that no one could help the other. They had all come to poverty; and how can beggars help each other, when all are penniless? And then they began to look upon one another in despair. In speechless silence they resigned themselves to the woe which threatened to overwhelm them. Such is the sinner's condition, when first he begins to feel a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, he looks to others. He thinks, "Surely the minister can help me, the priest may assist me." "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." But after awhile he discovers that the state of all men is the same, that all are without grace, that "none can save his brother, or give to God a ransom for him." And apart from Christ we, my dear friends, this morning might look one on another, aghast and in despair—might try the wide world over, and say "Where is salvation to be found!" Oh! if it lay in the very center of the earth we could dig through the rocks and into the very bowels of the earth to find it. If it were in heaven, we would seek to scale it with some Babel-tower, that we might reach the boon. If we had to walk through fire to gain it, we should gladly accept the burning pilgrimage. Or if we had to walk through the depths of the sea, we should be content to let all its billows roll over us, if we might find it. But if every man had to say to his fellow "there is no hope for us; we have all been condemned, we have all been guilty, we can do nothing to appease the Most High;" what a wretched world were ours, if we were equally convinced of sin, and equally convinced that there was no hope of mercy! This, then, was the condition of Jacob's sons temporally, and it is our condition by nature spiritually. We are in a land of famine; we have nothing of our own; we are hungering, we are dying of hunger, and our case seems totally hopeless, for on earth there is nothing to be found to satisfy the raving hunger of the soul.

II. Now we come, in the second place, to the GOOD NEWS. Jacob had faith, and the ears of faith are always quiet; faith can hear the tread of mercy, though the footfall be as light as that of the angel among the flowers. Though mercy should be a thousand leagues away, and its journey should occupy ten thousand years, yet faith could hear its footsteps, for it is quick of ear and quick of eye. Nay, more, if God should give a promise which should never be fulfilled till the old rolling skies were dissolved, faith would look through all the generations, along the vista of the centuries, and see the spirit of promise afar off, and rejoice therein. Jacob had the ears of faith. He had been at prayer, I doubt not, asking God to deliver his family in the time of famine; and by-and-bye he hears, first of his household, that there is corn in Egypt. Do you see the gathering? The venerable patriarch sits in the tent. his sons come to pay him their morning obeisance; there is despair in their faces, they bring their little children with them. All that the patriarch has he gives; but this morning he adds good news to his benediction, he says to them, "There is corn in Egypt." Can you conceive how their hearts leaped? He scarcely needs to add, "Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live and not die." Jacob heard the good news, and communicated it as speedily as possible to his descendants.

Now, we also have heard the good news. Good news has been sent to us in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. "There is corn in Egypt." We need not die. There is salvation with God. We need not perish—there is mercy in the Most High. We need not think that we must necessarily be lost; there is a way of salvation; there is a hope of escape—do we not receive the tidings in joy? Do not our hearts rejoice within us at the thought that we are not hopelessly condemned, but that

the Lord may yet have mercy upon us? Now, we have better news than even Jacob had; although the news is similar, understanding it in a spiritual sense.

First, we are told to-day by sure and certain witnesses, that there is corn in Egypt, there is mercy in God. Jacob's messenger might have deceived him—idle tales are told everywhere, and in days of famine men are very apt to tell a falsehood, thinking *that* to be true which they wish were so. The hungry man is apt to hope that there may be corn somewhere; and then he thinks there is; and then he says there is; and then, what begins with a wish comes to be a rumor and a report. But this day, my friends, it is no idle talk; no dream, no rumor of a deceiver. There is mercy with God, there is salvation with him, that he may be feared. The fountain is filled to the brim; the granaries are full of the good old corn of the kingdom. There is no reason why we should perish. By sure infallible, and certain witness, we are told upon the very oath of God himself; that there is salvation for the sons of men. But Jacob did not know how much corn there was in Egypt. He said there was corn, but he did not know how much. Now, today, we are something like Jacob. There is mercy with God; we do not know, any of us, how much. "Oh," says one sinner, "I am such a hungry soul, that all the granaries of Egypt would not be enough for me." Ah, but, poor soul. God is all that you could want, even though you should want an infinite supply. The sixty-six in the family of Jacob would make a heavy draw upon the granaries of any nation; but yet, so abundant were the storehouses in every city, that we do not read that Joseph missed all that he gave them. So it is with you. Your necessities are immense, but nothing equal to the supply. Your soul requires great mercy, but you will no more exhaust the mercy of God than the taking a cup full of water out of the sea would exhaust its fullness. High above the summits of your mountain-sins the stars of grace are shining.

There is another thing in which we have the start of Jacob. Jacob knew there was corn in Egypt, but did not know who had the keeping of it. If he had known that, he would have said, "My sons, go down at once to Egypt, do not be at all afraid, your brother is lord of Egypt, and all the corn belongs to him." Nay, more I can readily imagine that he would have gone himself, forthwith. And Simeon and the rest though they might feel a little abashed, when they thought of the unkindness that they had shown to their brother, when they began to feel a little hungry, if they had known all about Joseph, would have said, "We need not fear to go and submit ourselves to him, for we know he has a gracious and loving heart and would never let his poor brethren die of hunger." Sinner, the mercies of God are under no lock and key except those over which Christ has the power. The granaries of heaven's mercy have no steward to keep them save Christ. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. And the keys of grace are swinging at the girdle of your own brother; he who died for you, he who loved you so much, that he loved you better than he did himself. He has the keys of grace, and will you fear to go? Will you tremble to go to these rich stores of mercy when they are in the hands of a loving, tender, and ever-gracious Lord? No, this is good news, that all the grace is in the hands of Jesus.

There is yet another thing which the sons of Jacob knew nothing of. When they went to Egypt, they went on hap-hazard. If they knew there was corn, they were not sure they would get it. But when you and I go to Christ, we are invited guests. Suppose now you should have it in your heart to invite some of the most ragged people of London to your house; you give to each of them an invitation, and they come to the door, perhaps they are half ashamed to come in, and want to steal round the back way; but if they should meet you, they are not at all abashed, they say, "Sir, I was not afraid to come, because you sent me an invitation. If it had not been for that, although I might have known your generosity, although I might have known you could afford to help me, I should

not have dared to come if you had not sent me an invitation." Now Joseph sent no invitation to his brethren; but Jesus has sent an invitation to you. To each of you who are perishing sinners he has said, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." He has said himself, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." He has sent his messengers and bidden them cry, "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." Now, sinner, you need never be afraid to go where you are invited. Christ Jesus invites; he invites the hungry, he invites the weary. Such are you—both hungry and weary. He invites the heavy laden—such are you. Come and welcome, then. You need not go on hap-hazard, you have the invitation and the promise. Wherefore look ye then at one another? Arise and come to Christ; arise and come to his cross. May he now prove in you his power to save!

But one other remark, and I will have done with this second point. The sons of Jacob were in one respect better off than you are apparently, for they had money with which to buy. Jacob was not a poor man in respect of wealth, although he had now become exceedingly poor from lack of bread. His sons had money to take with them. Glittering bars of gold they thought must surely attract the notice of the ruler of Egypt. You have no money, nothing to bring to Christ, nothing to offer him. You offered him something once, but he rejected all you offered him as being spurious coin, imitations, counterfeits, and good for nothing. And now utterly stripped, hopeless, penniless, you say you are afraid to go to Christ because you have nothing of your own. Let me assure you that you are never in so fit a condition to go to Christ as when you have nowhere else to go to, and have nothing of your own. But you reply, "I should like at least to feel my need more." That would be something of your own—you must go to Christ with nothing. "But I wish I could believe more." That would be something of your own. You want to get your own faith to bring to Christ. No, you must go to Christ just as you are. "But sir, I must reform myself before I can believe that Christ will have mercy upon me." Your fancied reformation would unfit you for grace, rather than prepare you for it. Reformation before grace is frequently a step backward instead of forward. That reformation may confirm you in self-righteousness, but it cannot bring you to Christ. Go as you are. At a hospital, the best recommendation is sickness. He that is a little sick needs some help to get him there, but let me be run over in the street, and be near to die, and I need nothing to recommend me to the hospital—open flies the door, and I am taken in directly. So a condition of your lost and ruined state is the only recommendation you need in going to Christ. Just now a lot of people want to bestow their charity, and they do not know how to get at the lowest class of the poor; they want to lay hold of those whose beds are made of straw; they desire to gain knowledge of those low lodging-places of the very poor, which are worse than the places that beasts inhabit. These are the men they want to find; and the greater the poverty the more recommendation. So in your case. Your woes plead with God. Your wants, your misery, your helplessness, your ill-deserts, these are the orators that move the heart of God towards you, but nothing else. Come just as you are, with nothing in your hand, to Jesus Christ, who is Lord over the land of mercy, and will not send you empty away.

III. Thus I have noticed the good news as well as the pitiful plight. I come now to the third part, which is GOOD ADVICE. Jacob asks, "Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die." This is very practical advice. I wish people would act the same with religion as they do in temporal affairs. Jacob's sons did not say, "Well, that is very good news; I believe

it,” and then sit still and die. No, they went straightway to the place of which the good news told them corn was to be had. So should it be in matters of religion. We should not be content merely to hear the tidings, but we should never be satisfied until by divine grace we have availed ourselves of them’ and have found mercy in Christ. Some ministers do in fact tell poor awakened sinners to be inactive; they say to them something like this—“You must wait, you must wait till Christ comes to you.” They will even dissuade the woman who had an issue of blood, from pushing through the crowd to lay hold upon the hem of the Redeemer’s garment. They would bid the man who is crying aloud by the wayside to hold his tongue; to sit still quietly till Christ should turn and look upon him. They cannot endure that Christ Jesus should *invite* men to his feast, much less that the servants of the Lord should endeavor to compel them to come in. They excuse the sinner and even dare to teach that the rejection of Christ by the sinner, is no sin at all. Now, as in the sight of God, I do fear such men are guilty of the blood of souls. I would not stand in the position of a man who talks like that for all the stars thrice reckoned up in gold. I cannot understand that; I cannot understand that when my Master said, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed,” that I am to tell a sinner to sit still. When the angel said, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee; stay not in all the plain; but flee to the mountain, lest thou be consumed,” am I to go to Sodom, and say to Lot, “Stop here till the Lord brings you out?” Why, we know, of a surety, that salvation is the Lord’s work, and the Lord’s work alone; but we equally know of a surety, that when the Lord works, he sets us to work. When he works in our soul, the Lord does not believe; he has nothing to believe, he makes us believe. When the Lord works repentance, he does not repent what has he to repent of? He makes us repent. The Lord brought Lot out of Sodom, but did not Lot use his own legs to run to the mountain? And so it must be with us. Christ does all, but he makes us the instruments. He tells us to stretch out our own withered hand, and yet we do not stretch forth that withered hand of ourselves. He tells us to do it, and we do it through his strength. Tell a sinner to sit still! What does hell desire more than that? Tell a sinner to wait; would not Satan approve of such a ministry? And does he not approve of it? Ah, my brethren, he that loves his Master, he that loves the gospel, he that loves men’s souls cannot preach such untruthful and unchristian doctrine. He feels that the humanity within him is much more the grace within him, revolts against a thing so barbarous and so inhuman as that. No, when we preach to the sinner, we must say to him, “Thou knowest thy need, thou feelest that thou canst not be saved except through mercy in Christ. Look to him, believe on him, seek him, and thou shalt find him.”

But I have heard it said, that if a sinner seeks Christ without Christ seeking him he will perish. Now what an absurd thing for anybody to say. Because, did a sinner, or could a sinner ever seek Christ without Christ seeking him. I never like to suppose an impossibility, and then draw an inference from it. “Suppose,” said one, I know of—“a sinner should come to Christ without Christ coming to him, he would be lost.” Well, that is very clear, only it is supposing a thing that cannot happen; and what is the good of that? Sometimes people have put to me this question—“Suppose a child of God should live in sin, and die in sin, would he be saved?” The thing is impossible. If you suppose yourself into a difficulty, you must suppose yourself out of it. It is like the old supposition, “Suppose the moon were cream cheese, what would become of us on a dark night?” So, suppose a sinner should come to Christ without Christ coming to him, what could be the result? It is supposing an impossibility, and then drawing an absurdity from it. Christ said, “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” If a sinner comes, he is drawn, or

he would not have come. It is mine, therefore, to exhort the sinner to come to Christ; it is the Holy Spirit's work to enforce the exhortation, and draw the sinner to Christ.

Lastly, let me put this question, "Why do ye look one upon another?" Why do ye sit still? Fly to Christ, and find mercy. Oh, says one, "I cannot get what I expect to have." But what do you expect? I believe some of our hearers expect to feel an electric shock, or something of that kind, before they are saved. The gospel says simply, "Believer." That they will not understand. They think there is to be something so mysterious about it. They can't make out what it is; but they are going to wait for it and then believe. Well, you will wait till doomsday; for if you do not believe this simple gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," God will not work signs and wonders to please your foolish desires. Your position is this—you are a sinner, lost, ruined; you cannot help yourself. Scripture says, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Your immediate business, your instantaneous duty is to cast yourself on that simple promise, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that as he came into the world to save sinners, he has therefore come to save you. What you have to do with, is that simple command—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Now take the sons of Jacob as your example. No sooner had their father told them what they had to do than the first thing they did was, they went and fetched their empty sacks. Now do the same. "What is the good of them?" you say; "there is no corn in them." No I know there is not, still you must take your empty sacks and have them filled. Bring out your sins; bring out all the aggravation of your sins; cast them all at the feet of Christ, and make your confession. There is no salvation in confession, but still you cannot have salvation without it. You must make a full and free confession of your sins. "*What, to you, sir?*" I am extremely obliged to you. I would not hear your sins on any account. No sum of money would be sufficient compensation for the impurity that must accrue to any man who shall hear another's sins. I would not tell you mine; much less hear your's. No, make your confessions to God. Go to your closet; shut to your door; then pull out your empty seeks—that is, make a full confession of your sins; tell the Lord that you are a wretch undone without his sovereign grace. When you have done that, you say, what next? Then cast away all hope you ever had or have, put away all trust in your good works and everything else; and what next? Cast yourself simply on this great truth, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and you shall rise from your knees a happier man. Or if tlmr is not the case, try it again, and again, and again, and it shall not fail you. Prayer and faith were never lost. He who confessed his sins and sought the Saviour never roughs in vain. When I was first convinced of sin, yet a lad, I did go to God and I cried for mercy with all my might, but I did not find it. I do not think I knew what the gospel was. For three year's I persevered in that; and many a day, in every room of the house in which I lived, as each room became unoccupied, upon an occasion, have I spent hours in prayer, the tears rolling down my cheeks, and straining myself in an agony of desire to find Christ and find salvation. But it never came. It was not until I heard that simple doctrine, "Look unto me and be ye saved." I then found that my prayers were a kind of righteousness of my own that I was relying on them, and consequent was on the wrong road. Then did the Holy Spirit enable me to look to Christ hanging on the cross. I did not give up my prayers, but I did put the Lord Jesus, the object of my faith, far above all prayers, and then when I had looked to him hanging, dying, bleeding, my soul rejoiced, and I fell upon my knees no more to cry with agony, but to exclaim with delight, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." But if in that day, instead of simply looking to Christ, I had said, "No, Lord, I will not wash in Jordan and be clean. I will wait till Elijah comes out and strikes the leper with his hand; I will not look to the brazen serpent. That is legal preaching, that is

Arminian doctrine. I will wait till the serpent knocks right against my eyes," it would have never come. But having looked simply to Christ, I cast all my other trust away; and how my soul rejoices in the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. So shall it be with you. The gospel is this day freely preached to you. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from heaven, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; and was crucified for sin. Turn now your eyes to yonder cross. Behold a God expiring. Behold the Infinite hanging on the tree in pangs. Those sufferings must save you; will you rely upon them? Without any other trust, shall the cross be the unbuttressed pillar of your hope? If so, you *are* saved. The moment you believe in Jesus, the Redeemer, you *are* saved, your sins are forgiven; God has accepted you as his child; you are in a state of grace; you are passed from death unto life. Not only are you not condemned but you never shall be. There is for you a crown, a harp, a mansion, in the realms of the glorified. Oh that God may help you now to go down into Egypt for heavenly corn, and may you return with your sacks full to the brim.

In conclusion, I make this last remark.—Did you notice the argument Jacob used why the sons should go to Egypt? It was this—"That we may live, and not die." Sinner, this is my argument with thee this morning. My dear hearers, the gospel of Christ is a matter of life and death with you. It is not a matter of little importance, but of *all* importance. There is an alternative before you; you will either be eternally damned, or everlastingly saved. Despise Christ, and neglect his great salvation, and you will be lost, as sure as you live. Believe in Christ; put your trust alone in him, and everlasting life is yours. What argument can be more potent than this to men that love themselves? Are you prepared for everlasting burnings? Friend, art thou ready to make thy bed in hell, and to be lost? If so, reject Christ. But if thou desirest to be blessed for ever, to be accepted of God in the tremendous day of judgment, and to be crowned by him in the day of the reward, I beseech thee, hear again the gospel, and obey it. "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." For this is the gospel; it is yet again preached to you, and this is its solitary mandate—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." O Lord, help us now to believe, if we have not believed before, for Jesus' sake!

<HR

Just published, No. 7 of the New Park street Tracts, entitled, "SO MANY CALLS," being the Anecdote to referred to in No. 227 of the "New Park Street Pulpit." Price Is 4d. per 100.

The Fainting Warrior

A Sermon

(No. 235)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 23rd, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“O wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Romans 7:24, 25.

IF I chose to occupy your time with controversial matter, I might prove to a demonstration that the apostle Paul is here describing his own experience as a Christian. Some have affirmed that he is merely declaring what he was before conversion, and not what he was when he became the recipient of the grace of God. But such persons are evidently mistaken, and I believe wilfully mistaken; for any ample-hearted, candid mind, reading through this chapter, could not fall into such an error. It is Paul the apostle, who was not less than the very greatest of the apostles—it is Paul, the mighty servant of God, a very prince in Israel, one of the King's mighty men—it is Paul, the saint and the apostle, who here exclaims, “O wretched man that I am!”

Now, humble Christians are often the dupes of a very foolish error. They look up to certain advanced saints and able ministers, and they say, “Surely, such men as these do not suffer as I do; they do not contend with the same evil passions as those which vex and trouble me.” Ah! if they knew the heard of those men, if they could read their inward conflicts, they would soon discover that the nearer a man lives to God, the more intensely has he to mourn over his own evil heart, and the more his Master honors him in his service, the more also doth the evil of the flesh vex and tease him day by day. Perhaps, this error is more natural, as it is certainly more common, with regard to apostolic saints. We have been in the habit of saying, *Saint Paul*, and *Saint John*, as if they were more saints than any other of the children of God. They are all saints whom God has called by his grace, and sanctified by his Spirit; but somehow we very foolishly put the apostles and the early saints into another list, and do not venture to look on them as common mortals. We look upon them as some extraordinary beings, who could not be men of like passions with ourselves. We are told in Scripture that our Saviour was “tempted in all points like as we are;” and yet we fall into the egregious error of imagining that the apostles, who were far inferior to the Lord Jesus, escaped these temptations, and were ignorant of these conflicts. The fact is, if you had seen the apostle Paul, you would have thought he was remarkably like the rest of the chosen family: and if you had talked with him, you would have said, “Why, Paul, I find that your experience and mine exactly agree. You are more faithful, more holy, and more deeply taught than I, but you have the self same trials to endure. Nay, in some respects you are more sorely tried than I.” Do not look upon the ancient saints as being exempt either from infirmities or sins, and do not regard them with that mystic reverence which almost makes you an idolater. Their holiness is attainable even by you, and their faults are to be censured as much as your own. I believe it is a Christian's duty to force his way into the inner circle of saintship; and if these saints were superior to us in their attainments, as they certainly were, let us follow them; let us press forward up to, yea, and beyond them, for I do not see that this is impossible. We have the same light that they had, the same grace is accessible to

us, and why should we rest satisfied until we have distanced them in the heavenly race? Let us bring them down to the sphere of common mortals. If Jesus was the Son of man, and very man, “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;” so were the apostles; and it is an egregious error to suppose that they were not the subjects of the same emotions, and the same inward trials, as the very meanest of the people of God. So far, this may tend to our comfort and to our encouragement, when we find that we are engaged in a battle in which apostles themselves have had to fight.

And now we shall notice this morning, first, *the two natures*, secondly *their constant battle*; thirdly, we shall step aside and look at *the weary warrior*, and hear him cry, “O wretched man that I am;” and then we shall turn our eye in another direction, and see that fainting warrior girding up his loins to the conflict, and becoming *an expectant victor*, while he shouts, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

I. First, then, THE TWO NATURES. Carnal men, unrenewed men, have one nature—a nature which they inherited from their parents, and which, through the ancient transgression of Adam, is evil, only evil, and that continually. Mere human nature, such as is common to every man, has in it many excellent traits, judging of it between man and man. A merely natural man may be honest, upright, kind, and generous, he may have noble and generous thoughts, and may attain unto a true and manly speech; but when we come to matters of true religion, spiritual matters that concern God and eternity, the natural man can do nothing. The carnal mind, whose ever mind it may be, is fallen, and is at enmity to God, does not know the things of God, nor can it ever know them. Now, when a man becomes a Christian, he becomes so through the infusion of a new nature. He is naturally “dead in trespasses and sins,” “without God and without hope.” The Holy Spirit enters into him, and implants in him a new principle, a new nature, a new life. That life is a high, holy and supernatural principle, it is, in fact the divine nature, a ray from the great “Father of Lights;” it is the Spirit of God dwelling in man. Thus, you see, the Christian becomes a double man—two men in one. Some have imagined that the old nature is turned out of the Christian: not so, for the Word of God and experience teach the contrary, the old nature is in the Christian unchanged, unaltered, just the same, as bad as ever it was; while the new nature in him is holy, pure and heavenly; and hence, as we shall have to notice in me next place—hence there arises a conflict between the two.

Now, I want you to notice what the apostle says about these two natures that are in the Christian, for I am about to contrast them. First, in our text the apostle calls the old nature “the *body* of this death.” Why does he call it “the *body* of this death?” Some suppose he means these dying bodies; but I do not think so. If it were not for sin, we should have no fault to find with our poor bodies. They are noble works of God, and are not in themselves the cause of sin. Adam in the garden of perfection, felt the body to be no encumbrance, nor if sin were absent should we have any fault to find with our flesh and blood. What, then, is it? I think the apostle calls the evil nature within him a body, *first*, in opposition to those who talk of the relics of corruption in a Christian. I have heard people say that there are relics, remainders and remnants of sin in a believer. Such men do not know much about themselves yet. Oh! it is not a bone, or a rag which is left; it is the whole body of sin that is there—the whole of it, “from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.” Grace does not maim this body and cut away its members; it leaves it entire, although blessed be God, it crucifies it, nailing it to the cross of Christ. *And again*, I think he calls it a body because it is something tangible. We all know that we have a body; it is a thing we can feel, we know it is there. The new nature is a spirit subtle, and not easy to detect, I sometimes have to question myself as to whether it is there at all. But as for my old nature, that is a body, I can never find it difficult to recognize

its existence, it is as apparent as flesh and bones. As I never doubt that I am in flesh and blood, so I never doubt but what I have sin within me. It is a body—a thing which I can see and feel, and which, to my pain, is ever present with me.”

Understand, then, that the old nature of the Christian is a body; it has in it a substance or, as Calvin puts it, it is a *mass* of corruption. It is not simply a shred, a remnant—the cloth of the old garment, but the whole of it is there still. True, it is crushed beneath the foot of grace; it is cast out of its throne; but it is there, there in all its entireness, and in all its sad tangibility, a body of death. But why does he call it a body of *death*? Simply to express what an awful thing this sin is that remains in the heart. It is a body of *death*. I must use a figure, which is always appended to this text, and very properly so. It was the custom of ancient tyrants, when they wished to put men to the most fearful punishments, to tie a dead body to them, placing the two back to back; and there was the living man, with a dead body closely strapped to him, rotting, putrid, corrupting, and this he must drag with him wherever he went. Now, this is just what the Christian has to do. He has within him the new life; he has a living and undying principle, which the Holy Spirit has put within him, but he feels that every day he has to drag about with him this dead body, this body of death, a thing as loathsome, as hideous, as abominable to his new life, as a dead stinking carcass would be to a living man. Francis Quarles gives a picture at the beginning of one of his emblems, of a great skeleton in which a living man is encased. However quaint the fancy, it is not more singular than true. There is the old skeleton man, filthy, corrupt and abominable. He is a cage for the new principle which God has put in the heart. Consider a moment the striking language of our text, “*The body of this death,*” *it is death incarnate, death concentrated*, death dwelling in the very temple of life. Did you ever think what an awful thing death is? The thought is the most abhorrent to human nature. You say you do not fear death, and very properly; but the reason why you do not fear death is because you look to a glorious immortality. Death in itself is a most frightful thing. Now, inbred sin has about it all the unknown terror, all the destructive force, and all the stupendous gloom of death. A poet would be needed to depict the conflict of life with death—to describe a living soul condemned to walk through the black shades of confusion, and to bear incarnate death in its very bowels. But such is the condition of the Christian. As a regenerate man he is a firing, bright, immortal spirit; but he has to tread the shades of death. He has to do daily battle with all the tremendous powers of sin, which are as awful, as sublimely terrific, as even the power’s of death and hell.

Upon referring to the preceding chapter, we find the evil principle styled “the old man.” There is much meaning in that word “old.” But let it suffice us to remark, that in age the new nature is not upon an equal footing with the corrupt nature. There are some here who are sixty years old in their humanity, who can scarce number two years in the life of grace. Now pause and meditate upon the warfare in the heart. It is the contest of an infant with a full-grown man, the wrestling of a babe with a giant. Old Adam, like some ancient oak, has thrust his roots into the depths of manhood; can the divine infant uproot him and cast him from his place? This is the work, this is the labor. From its birth the new nature begins the struggle, and it cannot cease from it until the victory be perfectly achieved. Nevertheless, it is the moving of a mountain, the drying up of an ocean the threshing of the hills, and who is sufficient for these things? The heaven-born nature needs, and will receive, the abundant help of its Author, or it would yield in the struggle, subdued beneath the superior strength of its adversary and crushed beneath his enormous weight.

Again, observe, that the old nature of man, which remains in the Christian is *evil*, and it cannot ever be anything else but evil, for we are told in this chapter that “in me,”—that is, in my

flesh—"there dwelleth no good thing." The old Adam-nature cannot be improved; it cannot be made better; it is hopeless to attempt it. You may do what you please with it, you may educate it, you may instruct it, and thus you may give it more instruments for rebellion, but you cannot make the rebel into the friend, you cannot turn the darkness into light; it is an enemy to God, and an enemy to God it ever must be. On the contrary, the new life which God has given us cannot sin. That is the meaning of a passage in John, where it is said, "The child of God sinneth not; he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The old nature is evil only evil, and that continually, the new nature is wholly good; it knows nothing of sin, except to hate it. Its contact with sin brings it pain and misery, and it cries out, "Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech, that I tabernacle in the tents of Kedar."

I have thus given you some little picture of the two natures. Let me again remind you that these two natures are essentially unchangeable. You cannot make the new nature which God has given you less divine; the old nature you cannot make less impure and earthly. Old Adam is a condemned thing. You may sweep the house, and the evil spirit may seem to go out of it, but he will come back again and bring with him seven other devils more wicked than himself. It is a leper's house, and the leprosy is in every stone from the foundation to the roof; there is no part sound. It is a garment spotted by the flesh; you may wash, and wash, and wash, but you shall never wash it clean; it were foolish to attempt it. Whilst on the other hand the new nature can never be tainted—spotless, holy and pure, it dwells in our hearts; it rules and reigns there expecting the day when it shall cast out its enemy, and without a rival it shall be monarch in the heart of man for ever.

II. I have thus described the two combatants; we shall now come in the next place to THEIR BATTLE. There was never deadlier feud in all the world between nations than there is between the two principles, right and wrong. But right and wrong are often divided from one another by distance, and therefore they have a less intense hatred. Suppose an instance: right holds for liberty, therefore right hates the evil of slavery. But we do not so intensely hate slavery as we should do if we saw it before our eyes: then would the blood boil, when we saw our black brother, smitten by the cow-hide whip. Imagine a slaveholder standing here and smiting his poor slave until the red blood gushed forth in a river; can you conceive your indignation? Now it is distance which makes you feel this less acutely. The right forgets the wrong, because it is far away. But suppose now that right and wrong lived in the same house; suppose two such desperate enemies, cribbed, cabined, and confined within this narrow house, *man*; suppose the two compelled to dwell together, can you imagine to what a desperate pitch of fury these two would get with one another. The evil thing says, "I will turn thee out, thou intruder; I cannot be peaceful as I would, I cannot riot as I would, I cannot indulge just as I would; out with thee, I will never be content until I slay thee." "Nay," says the new born nature, "I will kill thee, and drive thee out. I will not suffer stick or stone of thee to remain. I have sworn war to the knife with thee; I have taken out the sword and cast away the scabbard, and will never rest till I can sing complete victory over thee, and totally eject thee from this house of mine." They are always at enmity wherever they are; they were never friends, and never can be. The evil must hate the good, and the good must hate the evil.

And mark although we might compare the enmity to the wolf and lamb, yet the new-born nature is not the lamb in all respects. It may be in its innocence and meekness, but it is not in its strength; for the new-born nature has all the omnipotence of God about it, whilst the old nature has all the strength of the evil one in it, which is a strength not easily to be exaggerated, but which we very frequently underestimate. These two things are ever desperately at enmity with one another. And even when they are both quiet they hate each other none the less. When my evil nature does not

rise, still it hates the newborn nature, and when the new-born nature is inactive, it has nevertheless a thorough abhorrence of all iniquity. The one cannot endure the other, it must endeavor to thrust it forth. Nor do these at any time allow an opportunity to pass from being revenged upon one another. There are times when the old nature is very active, and then how will it ply all the weapons of its deadly armoury against the Christian. You will find yourselves at one time suddenly attacked with anger, and when you guard yourself against the hot temptation, on a sudden you will find pride rising, and you will begin to say in yourself; "Am I not a good man to have kept my temper down?" And the moment you thrust down your pride there will come another temptation, and lust will look out of the window of your eyes, and you desire a thing upon which you ought not to look, and ere you can shut your eyes upon the vanity, sloth in its deadly torpor surrounds you, and you give yourself up to its influence and cease to labor for God. And then when you bestir yourselves once more, you find that in the very attempt to rouse yourself you have awakened your pride. Evil haunts you go where you may, or stand in what posture you choose. On the other hand the new nature will never lose an opportunity of putting down the old. As for the means of grace, the newborn nature will never rest satisfied unless it enjoys them. As for prayer, it will seek by prayer to wrestle with the enemy. It will employ faith, and hope, and love, the threatenings, the promises, providence, grace, and everything else to cast out the evil. Well," says one, "I don't find it so." Then I am afraid of you. If you do not hate sin so much that you do everything to drive it out, I am afraid you are not a living child of God. Antinomians like to hear you preach about the evil of the heart, but here is the fault with them, they do not like to be told that unless they hate that evil, unless they seek to drive it out and unless it is the constant disposition of their new-born nature to root it up, they are yet in their sins. Men who only believe their depravity, but do not hate it, are no further than the devil on the road to heaven. It is not my being corrupt that proves me a Christian, nor knowing I am corrupt, but that I hate my corruption. It is my agonizing death struggle with my corruptions that proves me to be a living child of God. These two natures will never cease to struggle so long as we are in this world. The old nature will never give up; it will never cry truce, it will never ask for a treaty to be made between the two. It will always strike as often as it can. When it lies still it will only be preparing for some future battle. The battle of Christian with Apollyon lasted three hours; but the battle of Christian with himself lasted all the way from the Wicket-gate to the River Jordan. The enemy within can never be driven out while we are here. Satan may sometimes be absent from us, and get such a defeat that he is glad to go howling back to his den, but old Adam abideth with us from the first even to the last. He was with us when we first believed in Jesus, and long ere that, and he will be with us till that moment when we shall leave our bones in the grave, our fears in the Jordan, and our sins in oblivion.

Once more observe, that neither of these two natures will be content in the fight without bringing in allies to assist. The evil nature has old relations, and in its endeavor to drive out the grace that is within, it sends off messengers to all its helpers. Like Chedorlasmer, the King of Elam, it bringeth other kings with it, when it goeth out to battle. "Ah!" says old Adam, "I have friends in the pit." He sends a missive down to the depths, and willing allies come therefrom—spirits from the vasty deep of hell; devils without number come up to the help of their brother. And then, not content with that, the flesh says:—"Ah! I have friends in this *world*;" and then the world sends its fierce cohorts of temptation, such as the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. What a battle, when sin, Satan, and the world, make a dead-set upon the Christian at once. "Oh," says one, "it is a terrible thing to be

a Christian." I assure you it is. It is one of the hardest things in the world to be a child of God; in fact, it is impossible, unless the Lord makes us his children, and keeps us so.

Well, what does the new nature do? When it sees all these enemies, it cries unto the Lord, and then the Lord sends it friends. First comes in to its help, Jehovah, in the everlasting counsel, and reveals to the heart its own interest in the secrets of eternity. Then comes Jesus with his blood. "Thou shalt conquer," says he; "I will make thee more than a conqueror through my death." And then appears the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. With such assistance, this new-born nature is more than a match for its enemies. God will sometimes leave that new nature alone, to let it know its own weakness; but it shall not be for long, lest it should sink in despair. Are you fighting with the enemy to-day, my dear Christian brethren? Are Satan, the flesh, and the world—that hellish trinity—all against you? Remember, there is a divine trinity for you. Fight on, though like Valiant-for-Truth, your blood runs from your hand and glues your sword to your arm. Fight on! for with you are the legions of heaven; God himself is with you; Jehovah Nissi is your banner, and Jehovah Rophi is the healer of your wounds. You shall overcome; for who can defeat Omnipotence, or trample divinity beneath his foot?

I have thus endeavored to describe the conflict; but understand me, it cannot be described. We must say, as Hart does in his hymn, when after singing the emotions of his soul, he says—

"But, brethren, you can surely guess,
For you perhaps have felt the same."

If you could see a plain upon which a battle is fought, you would see how the ground is torn up by the wheels of the cannon, by the horse hoofs, and by the trampling of men. What desolation is where once the golden crops of harvest grew. How is the ground sodden with the blood of the slain. How frightful the result of this terrible struggle. But if you could see the believers' heart after a spiritual battle, you would find it just a counterpart of the battle-field—as much cut up as the ground of the battle-field after the direst conflict that men or fiends have ever waged. For, think: we are combating man with himself; nay, more, man with the whole world; nay, more, man with hell; God with man, against man, the world and hell. What a fight is that! It were worth an angel's while to come from the remotest fields of ether to behold such a conflict.

III. We come now to notice THE WEARY COMBATANT. He lifts up his voice, and weeping he cries, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is the cry of a panting warrior. He has fought so long that he has lost his breath, and he draws it in again; he takes breath by prayer. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He will not give up the conflict; he knows he cannot, and he dare not. That thought does not enter into his mind; but the conflict is so sore, the battle so furious, that he is almost defeated; he sits down to refresh himself, and thus he sighs out his soul; like the panting hart, longing for the water brook, he says, "O wretched man that I am." Nay, it is more than that. It is the cry of one who is fainting. He has fought till all his strength is spent, and he falls back into the arms of his Redeemer with this fainting gasp, "O wretched man that I am!" His strength has failed him; he is sorely beaten in the battle, he feels that without the help of God he is so totally defeated that he commences his own wail of defeat, "O wretched man that I am." And then he asks this question, "Who shall deliver me?" And there comes a voice from the Law, "I cannot and I will not." There comes a voice from Conscience, "I can make thee see the battle, but I cannot help thee in it." And then there comes a cry from old Human Nature, and that says, "Ah! none can deliver thee, I shall yet destroy thee; thou shalt fall by the hand of thine enemy; the house of David shall be destroyed,

and Saul shall live and reign for ever." And the poor fainting soldier cries again, "Who shall deliver me?" It seems a hopeless case, and I believe that sometimes the true Christian may think himself hopelessly given over to the power of sin.

The wretchedness of Paul, I think, lay in two things, which are enough to make any man wretched. Paul believed the doctrine of human responsibility, and yet he felt the doctrine of human inability. I have heard people say sometimes—"You tell the sinner that he cannot believe and repent without the help of the Holy Spirit, and yet you tell him that it is his duty to believe and repent. How are these two to be reconciled? We reply that they do not want any reconciliation; they are two truths of Holy Scripture, and we leave them to reconcile themselves, they are friends, and friends do not need any reconciliation. But what seems a difficulty as a matter of doctrine is clear as daylight as a matter of experience. I know it is my duty to be perfect, but I am conscious I cannot be. I know that every time I commit sin I am guilty, and yet I am quite certain that I must sin—that my nature is such that I cannot help it. I feel that I am unable to get rid of this body of sin and death, and yet I know I ought to get rid of it. These two things are enough to make any man miserable—to know that he is responsible for his sinful nature, and yet to know that he cannot get rid of it—to know that he ought to keep it down, and yet to feel he cannot—to know that it is his business to keep God's law perfectly, and walk in the commandments of the law blameless, and yet to know by sad experience that he is as unable to do so as he is to reverse the motion of the globe, or dash the sun from the center of the spheres. How will not these two things drive any man to desperation? The way in which some men avoid the dilemma, is by a denial of one of these truths. They say, "Well, it is true I am unable to cease from sin;" and then they deny their obligation to do so; they do not cry, "O wretched man that I am;" they live as they like, and say they cannot help it. On the other hand, there are some men who know they are responsible; but then they say, "Ay but I can cast off my sin," and these are tolerably happy. The Arminian and the hyper-Calvinist both of them get on very comfortably; but the man who believes these two doctrines, as taught in God's Word, that he is responsible for sin and yet that he is unable to get rid of it, I do not wonder that when he looks into himself he finds enough to make him sigh and cry, ever, to faintness and despair, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death."

And now says one, "Ah, I would be a Christian, if that is the way in which he faints—it be is always to be fighting with himself; and even until he despairs of victory." Stop a moment. Let us complete the picture. This man is fainting; but he will be restored by-and-bye. Think not that he is hopelessly defeated, he falls to rise, he faints but to be revived afresh. I know a magic, which can awaken his sleeping hopes and shoot a thrill along the freezing current of his blood. Let us sound the promise in his ear, see how soon he revives. Let us put the cordial to his lips; see how he starts up and plays the man again. "I have been almost defeated" says he, "almost driven to despair. Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again." And he lets fly against him once more, shouting, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." So on he goes again, more than a conqueror, through him that has loved him.

IV. This brings me to this last point, that **THE CHRISTIAN IS TO BE A CONQUEROR AT LAST**. Do you think that we are for ever to be the drudges and the slaves of sin? Am I for ever to be the galley-slave of my own nature, to tug for freedom and never to escape? Am I always to have this dead man chained to my back, and sniff the pestiferous exhalations of his putrid body? No, no, no, that which is within my heart, is like a caged eagle; and I know that soon the bars which confine me shall be broken; the door of my cage shall be opened, and I shall mount with my eye upon the

sun of glory, soaring upward, true to the line, moving neither to the right hand nor to the left, flying till I reach my eyrie in the everlasting rocks of God's eternal love. No, we that love the Lord are not for ever to dwell in Mesech. The dust may besmear our robes and filth may be upon our brow, and beggared may be our garment, but we shall not be so for ever. The day is coming when we shall rise and shake ourselves from the dust, and put on our beautiful garments. It is true we are now like Israel in Canaan. Canaan is full of enemies; but the Canaanites shall and must be driven out. Amalek shall be slain, Agag shall be hewn in pieces; our enemies shall, every one of them, be dispersed, and the whole land from Dan to Beersheba shall be the Lords. Christians, rejoice! You are soon to be perfect, you are soon to be free from sin, totally free from it, without one wrong inclination, one evil desire. You are soon to be as pure as the angels in light; nay, more, with your Master's garments on you are to be "holy as the holy one." Can you think of that? Is not that the very sum of heaven, the rapture of bliss, the sonnet of the hill-tops of glory—that you are to be perfect? No temptation can reach you from eye, or ear, or hand; nor if the temptation could reach you would you be hurt by it; for there will be nothing in you that could in any way foster sin. It would be as when a spark falls upon an ocean, your holiness would quench it in a moment. Yes, washed in the blood of Jesus, afresh baptized with the Holy Spirit, you are soon to walk the golden streets, white-robed and white-hearted too, and perfect as your Maker, you are to stand before his throne, and sing his praises to eternity.

Now, soldiers of Christ, to arms again! Once more rush into the fight, you cannot be defeated; you must overcome. Though you faint a little, yet take courage; you shall conquer through the blood of the Lamb.

And now, turning aside for a minute, I shall conclude by making an observation or two to many now present. There are some here who say, "I am never disturbed in that fashion." Then I am sorry for you. I will tell you the reason of your false peace. You have not the grace of God in your hearts. If you had you would surely find this conflict within you. Do not despise the Christian because he is in the conflict, despise yourself because you are out of it. The reason why the devil lets you alone is, that he knows you are his. He does not need to trouble you much now; he will have time enough to give you your wages as the last. He troubles the Christian because he is afraid of losing him; he thinks that if he does not tease him here, he shall never have the chance to do it in eternity, so he will bite him, and bark at him while he may. That is why the Christian is vexed more than you are. As for you, you may well be without any pain, for dead men feel no blows. You may well be without prickings of conscience; for men that are corrupt are not likely to feel wounds, though you stab them from head to foot. I pity your condition, for the worm that dieth not is preparing to feed upon you; the eternal vulture of remorse shall soon wet his horrid beak with the blood of your soul. Tremble; for the fires of hell are hot and unquenchable, and the place of perdition is hideous beyond a madman's dream. Oh that you would think of your last end. The Christian may have an evil present, but he has a glorious future; but your future is the blackness of darkness for ever. I adjure you by the living God, you that fear not Christ, consider your ways. You and I must give an account for this morning's service. You are warned, men; you are warned. Take heed to yourselves, that ye think not this life to be everything. *There* is a world to come; there is "after death the judgment." If you fear not the Lord, there is after judgment eternal wrath and everlasting misery.

And now a word to those who are seeking Christ. "Ah!" says one, "sir, I have sought Christ, but I feel worse than I ever was in my life. Before I had any thoughts about Christ I felt myself to be good, but now I feel myself to be evil." It is all right, my friend; I am glad to hear you say so.

When surgeons heal a patient's wound, they always take care to cut away the proud flesh, because the cure can never be radical while the proud flesh remains. The Lord is getting rid of your self-confidence and self-righteousness. He is just now revealing to your soul the deadly cancer which is festering within you. You are on the sure road to healing, if you are on the way to wounding. God wounds before he heals; he strikes a man dead in his own esteem before he makes him alive. "Ah," cries one, "but can I hope that I ever shall be delivered?" Yes, my brother, if you now look to Christ. I care not what your sin nor what your despair of heart; if you will only turn your eye to him who bled upon the tree, there is not only hope for you, but there is a certainty of salvation. I myself, while thinking over this subject, felt a horror of great darkness rush over my spirit, as I thought what danger I was in lest I should be defeated, and I could not get a glimpse of light into my burdened spirit, until I turned my eye, and saw my Master hanging on the tree. I saw the blood still flowing; faith laid hold upon the sacrifice, and I said, "This cross is the instrument of Jesu's victory, and shall be the means of mine." I looked to his blood; I remembered that I was triumphant in that blood, and I rose from my meditations, humbled, but yet rejoicing; cast down, but not in despair; looking for the victory. Do likewise. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: believe that. You are an awakened, conscious and penitent sinner; therefore, he came to save you. Believe his word; trust him. Do nothing for your own salvation of yourself, but trust him to do it. Cast yourself simply and only on him; and, as this Bible is true, you shall not find the promise fail you—"He that seeketh findeth; to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

May God help you, by giving you this new life within! May he help you to look to Jesus, and though long and hard be the conflict, sweet shall be the victory.

The Shameful Sufferer

A Sermon

(No. 236)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 30th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—Hebrews 12:2.

OH what shall I do, my Saviour to praise?” Where shall language be found which shall describe his matchless, his unparalleled love towards the children of men. Upon any ordinary subject one may find liberty of speech and fullness of utterance, but this subject lies out of the line of all oratory, and eloquence cannot attain unto it. This is one of the unutterable things—unutterable, because it surpasses thought, and defies the power of words. How, then, can we deal with that which is unutterable? I am conscious that all I can say concerning the sufferings of Jesus, this morning, will be but as a drop of the bucket. None of us know the half of the agony which he endured; none of us have ever fully comprehended the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Philosophers have probed the earth to its very center, threaded the spheres, measured the skies, weighed the hills—nay, weighed the world itself; but this is one of those vast, boundless things, which to measure doth surpass all but the Infinite itself. As the swallow but skimmeth the water, and diveth not into its depths, so all the descriptions of the preacher but skim the surface, while depths immeasurable must lie far beneath our observation. Well might a poet say

“O love, thou fathomless abyss!”

for this love of Christ is indeed measureless and fathomless. None of us can attain unto it. In speaking thereof we feel our own weakness, we cast ourselves upon the strength of the Spirit, but, even then, we feel that we can never attain unto the majesty of this subject. Before we can ever get a right idea of the love of Jesus, we must understand his previous glory in its height of majesty, and his incarnation upon the earth in all its depths of shame. Now, who can tell us the majesty of Christ? When he was enthroned in the highest heavens he was very God of very God; by him were the heavens made, and all the hosts thereof, by his power he hanged the earth upon nothing; his own almighty arm upheld the spheres; the pillars of the heavens rested upon him; the praises of angels, arch-angels, cherubim and seraphim, perpetually surrounded him; the full chorus of the Hallelujahs of the universe unceasingly flowed to the foot of his throne: he reigned supreme above all his creatures, God over all, blessed for ever. Who can tell his height, then? And yet this must be attained before we can measure the length of that mighty stoop which he took when he came to earth to redeem our souls. And who, on the other hand, can tell how low he descended? To be a man was something, but to be a man of sorrows was far more; to bleed, and die, and suffer, these were much for him who was the Son of God; but to suffer as he did—such unparalleled agony—to endure, as he did, a death of shame and a death of desertion of his God, this is a lower depth of condescending love which the most inspired mind must utterly fail to fathom. And yet must we first understand infinite height, and then, infinite depth; we must measure, in fact, the whole infinite that is between heaven and hell, before we can understand the love of Jesus Christ.

Yet because we cannot understand shall we therefore neglect, and because we cannot measure shall we therefore despise? Ah! no; let us go to Calvary this morning, and see this great sight. Jesus Christ, for the joy that was set before him, enduring the cross, despising the shame.

I shall endeavor to show you, first, the *shameful sufferer*; secondly, we shall endeavor to dwell upon *his glorious motive*; and then in the third place, we shall offer him to you as an *admirable example*.

I. Beloved, I wish to show you the SHAMEFUL SUFFERER. The text speaks of shame, and therefore before entering upon suffering, I shall endeavor to say a word or two upon the shame.

Perhaps there is nothing which men so much abhor as shame. We find that death itself has often been preferable in the minds of men to shame; and even the most wicked and callous-hearted have dreaded the shame and contempt of their fellow-creatures far more than any tortures to which they could have been exposed. We find Abimelech, a man who murdered his own brethren without compunction; we find even him overcome by shame, when “a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech’s head, and all to break his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.” Shame was too much for him. He would far rather meet the suicide’s death—for such it was—than he should be convicted of the shame of being slain by a woman. So was it with Saul also—a man who was not ashamed of breaking his oath, and of hunting his own son-in-law like a partridge upon the mountains—even he fell upon his own sword rather than it should be said of him that he fell by the Philistines. And we read of an ancient king, Zedekiah, that albeit he seemed reckless enough, he was afraid to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, lest the Jews who had fallen away to Nebuchadnezzar should make a mock of him.

These instances are but a few of many. It is well known that criminals and malefactors have often had a greater fear of public contempt than of ought else. Nothing can so break down the human spirit as to be subject continually to contempt, the visible and manifest contempt of one’s fellows; in fact to go further, shame is so frightful to man that it is one of the ingredients of hell itself; it is one of the bitterest drops in that awful cup of misery. The shame of everlasting contempt to which wicked men awake in the day of their resurrection; to be despised of men, despised of angels, despised of God, is one of the depths of hell. Shame, then, is a terrible thing to endure; and many of the proudest natures have been subdued when once they have been subjected to it. In the Saviour’s case, shame would be peculiarly shameful; the nobler a man’s nature, the more readily does he perceive the slightest contempt, and the more acutely does he feel it. That contempt which an ordinary man might bear without a suffering, he who has been bred to be obeyed, and who has all his life-long been honored, would feel most bitterly. Beggared princes and despised monarchs are among the most miserable of men; but here was our glorious Redeemer, in whose face was the nobility of Godhead itself, despised and spit upon, and mocked. Ye may, therefore, think how such a noble nature as his had to endure. The mere kite can bear to be mewed, but the eagle cannot bear to be hoodwinked and blindfolded; he hath a nobler spirit than that. The eye that hath faced the sun, cannot endure darkness without a tear. But Christ who was more than noble, matchlessly noble, something more than of a royal race, for him to be shamed, and mocked, must have been dreadful indeed.

Besides some minds are of such a delicate and sensitive disposition that they feel things far more than others. There are some of us who do not so readily perceive an affront, or when we do

perceive it, are totally indifferent to it. But there are others of a loving and tender heart; they have so long wept for others' woes, that their hearts have become tender, and they therefore feel the slightest brush of ingratitude from those they love, and if those for whom they are willing to suffer should utter words of blasphemy and rebuke against them, their souls would be pierced to the very quick. A man in armor would walk through thorns and briars without feeling, but a man who is naked feels the smallest of the thorns; now Christ was so to speak a naked spirit, he had stripped himself of all for manhood; he said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." He stripped himself of everything that could make him callous, for he loved with all his soul; his strong passionate heart was fixed upon the welfare of the human race; he loved them even unto death, and to be mocked by those for whom he died, to be spit upon by the creatures whom he came to save, to come unto his own, and to find that his own received him not, but actually cast him out, this was pain indeed. Ye tender hearts can weep for others' woes, and ye that love with a love as strong as death, and with a jealousy as cruel as the grave, ye can guess, but only you, what the Saviour must have endured, when all did mock him, all did scorn him, and he found none to pity, none to take his part.

To go back to the point with which we started—shame is peculiarly abhorrent to manhood, and far more to such a manhood as that which Christ carried about with him—a noble, sensitive, loving nature, such as no other manhood had ever possessed.

And now come and let us behold the pitiful spectacle of Jesus put to shame. He was put to shame in three ways—by shameful accusation, shameful mockery, and shameful crucifixion.

1. And, first, behold the Saviour's shame in his *shameful accusation*. He in whom was no sin, and who had done no ill, was charged with sin of the blackest kind. He was first arraigned before the Sanhedrim on no less a charge than that of blasphemy. And could he blaspheme?—he who said "It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me." Could he blaspheme? He who in the depths of his agony, when he sweat as it were great drops of blood at last cried, "My Father, not my will, but thine be done,"—could he blaspheme? No. And it is just because it was so contrary to his character, that he felt the accusation. To charge some of you here present with having blasphemed God, would not startle you, for ye have done it, and have done it so often as almost to forget that God abhors blasphemers, and that he "will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." But for one who loved as Jesus loved, and obeyed as he obeyed, for him to be charged with blasphemy, the accusation must have caused him peculiar suffering. We wonder that he did not fall to the ground, even as his betrayers did when they came to lay hold upon him. Such an accusation as that might blight an angel's spirit. Such a calumny might wither the courage of a cherub. Marvel not, then, that Jesus felt the shame of being accused of such a crime as this.

Nor did this content them. Having charged him with breaking the first table, they then charged him with violating the second: they said he was guilty of sedition; they declared that he was a traitor to the government of Caesar, that he stirred up the people, declaring that he himself was a king. And could he commit treason? he who said "my kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight;" he who when they would have taken him by force, to make him a king withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed—could he commit treason? It were impossible. Did he not pay tribute, and sent to the fish, when his poverty had not wherewith to pay the tax. Could he commit treason? He could not sin against Caesar, for he was Caesar's lord; he was King of kings, and Lord of lords. If he had chosen he could have taken the purple from the shoulders of Caesar and at a word have given Caesar to be a prey to the worms. He commit treason? 'Twas far enough

from Jesus, the gentle and the mild to stir up sedition or set man against man. Ah no, he was a lover of his country, and a lover of his race; he would never provoke a civil war, and yet this charge was brought against him. What would you think good citizens and good Christians, if you were charged with such a crime as this, with the clamours of your own people behind you crying out against you as so execrable an offender that you must die the death. Would not that abash you? Ah! but your Master had to endure this as well as the other. He despised the shameful indictments, and was numbered with the transgressors.

2. But next, Christ not only endured shameful accusation but he endured *shameful mocking*. When Christ was taken away to Herod, Herod set him at nought. The original word signifies made nothing of him. It is an amazing thing to find that man should make nothing of the Sun of God, who is all in all. He had made himself nothing, he had declared that he was a worm, and no man; but what a sin was that, and what a shame was that when Herod made him nothing! He had but to look Herod in the face, and he could have withered him with one glance of his fire-darting eyes. But yet Herod may meek him, and Jesus will not speak, and men of arms may come about him, and break their cruel jests upon his tender heart, but not a word has he to say, but "is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and like a sheep before her shearers is dumb."

You will observe that in Christ's mocking, from Herod's own hall, on to the time when he was taken from Pilate's hall of judgment to his crucifixion, and then onward to his death, the mockers were of many kinds. In the first place they mocked the Saviour's *person*. One of those things about which we may say but little, but of which we ought often to think, is the fact that our Saviour was stripped in the midst of a ribald soldiery, of all the garments that he had. It is a shame even for us to speak of this which was done by our own flesh and blood toward him who was our Redeemer. Those holy limbs which were the casket of the precious jewel of his soul were exposed to the shame and open contempt of men-coarse-minded men who were utterly destitute of every particle of delicacy. The person of Christ was stripped twice; and although our painters, for obvious reasons, cover Christ upon the cross, there he hung—the *naked Saviour* of a naked race. He who clothed the lilies had not wherewith to clothe himself; he who had clothed the earth with jewels and made for it robes of emeralds, had not so much as a rag to conceal his nakedness from a staring, gazing, mocking, hard-hearted crowd. He had made coats of skins for Adam and Eve when they were naked in the garden; he had taken from them those poor fig leaves with which they sought to hide their nakedness, given them something wherewith they might wrap themselves from the cold; but now they part his garments among them, and for his vesture do they cast lots, while he himself, exposed to the pitiless storm of contempt, hath no cloak with which to cover his shame. They mocked his person,—Jesus Christ declared himself to be the Son of God;—they mocked his *divine person* as well as his human—when he hung upon the cross, they said. "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe on thee." Frequently they challenge him to prove his divinity by turning aside from the work which he had undertaken. They asked him to do the very thing which would have disproved his divinity, in order that they might then, as they declared, acknowledge and confess that he was the Son of God. And now can you think of it? Christ was mocked as man, we can conceive him as yielding to this. But to be mocked *as God!* A challenge thrown to manhood, manhood would easily take up and fight the duel. Christian manhood would allow the gauntlet to lie there, or tread it beneath its foot in contempt, bearing all things, and enduring all things for Christ's sake. But can you think of God being challenged by his creature—the eternal Jehovah provoked by the creature which his own hated hath made; the Infinite despised by the

finite; he who fills all things, by whom all things exist, laughed at, mocked, despised by the creature of an hour, who is crushed before the moth! This was contempt indeed, a contempt of his complex person, of his manhood, and of his divinity.

But note next, they mocked all his *offices*, as well as his person. Christ was a king, and never such a king as he. He is Israel's David; all the hearts of his people are knit unto him. He is Israel's Solomon; he shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. He was one of royal race. We have some called kings on earth, children of Nimrod, these are called kings, but kings they are not. They borrow their dignity of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. But here was one of the true blood, one of the right royal race, who had lost his way, and was mingled with the common herd of men. What did they do? Did they bring crowns with which to honor him, and did the nobility of earth cast their robes beneath his feet to carpet his footsteps. See, what they do? He is delivered up to rough and brutal soldiery. They find for him a mimic throne, and having put him on it, they strip him of his own robes, and find some old soldier's cloak of scarlet or of purple, and put it about his loins. They plait a crown of thorns, and put it about his brow—a brow that was of old bedight with stars, and then they fix in his hand—a hand that will not resent an insult, a sceptre of reed, and then bowing the knee, they pay their mimic homage before him, making him a May-day king. Now, perhaps there is nothing so heartrending as royalty despised. You have read the story of an English king, who was taken out by his cruel enemies to a ditch. They seated him on an ant-hill, telling him that was his throne, and then they washed his face in the filthiest puddle they could find; and the tears running down his cheeks, he said, "he should yet be washed in clean water;" though he was bitterly mistaken. But think of the King of kings and Lord of lords, having for his adoration the spittle of guilty mouths, for homage the smittings of filthy hands, for tribute the jests of brutal tongues! Was ever shame like thine, thou King of kings, thou emperor of all worlds, flouted by the soldiery, and smitten by their menial hands? O earth! how couldst thou endure this iniquity. O ye heavens! why did ye not fall in very indignation to crush the men who thus blasphemed your Maker? Here was a shame indeed,—the king mocked by his own subjects.

He was a prophet, too, as we all know, and what did they that they might mock him as a prophet? Why they blindfolded him; shut out the light of heaven from his eyes, and then they smote him, and did buffet him with their hands, and they said, "Prophecy unto us who it is that smote thee." The prophet must make a prophecy to those who taunted him to tell them who it was that smote him. We love prophets; it is but the nature of mankind, that if we believe in a prophet we should love him. We believe that Jesus was the first and the last of prophets; by him all others are sent; we bow before him with reverential adoration. We count it to be our highest honor to sit at his feet like Mary; we only wish that we might have the comfort to wash his feet with our tears, and wipe them with the hairs of our head we feel that like John the Baptist, his shoe latchet we are not worthy to unloose and can we therefore bear the spectacle of Jesus the prophet, blindfolded and buffeted with insult and blows?

But they also mocked his priesthood, Jesus Christ had come into the world to be a priest to offer sacrifice, and his priesthood must be mocked too. All salvation lay in the hands of the priests, and now they say unto him, "It thou be the Christ save thyself and us," Ah! he saved others, himself he could not save. But oh, what mystery of scorn is here, what unutterable depths of shame that the great High Priest of our profession, he who is himself the Paschal Lamb, the altar, the priest,

the sacrifice, that he, the Son of God incarnate, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, should thus be despised, and thus be mocked.

He was mocked, still further, *in his sufferings*. I cannot venture to describe the sufferings of our Saviour under the lash of the scourge. St. Bernard, and many of the early fathers of the Church, give such a picture of Christ's scourging, that I could not endure to tell it over again. Whether they had sufficient data for what they say, I do not know; but this much I know,—“he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” I know it must have been a terrible scourging, to be called wounding, bruising, chastisement, and stripes; and, remember, that every time the lash fell on his shoulders, the laugh of him who used the lash was mingled with the stripe, and every time the blood poured out afresh, and the flesh was torn off his bones, there was a jest and a jeer, to make his pain yet more poignant and terrible. And when he came at last to his cross, and they nailed him upon it, how they continued the mockery of his sufferings! We are told that the high priests and the scribes stood, and at length sat and watched him there. When they saw his head fall upon his breast, they would, no doubt, make some bitter remark about it, and say, “Ah! he will never lift his head again among the multitude;” and when they saw his hands bleeding they would say, “Ha, ha, these were the hands that touched the lepers, and that raised the dead, they will never do this again;” and when they saw his feet, they would say, “Ah, those feet will never tread this land again, and journey on his pilgrimages of mercy;” and then some coarse, some villainous, some brutal, perhaps some beastly jest would be made concerning every part of his thrice-adorable person. They mocked him, and, at last, he called for drink, and they gave him vinegar—mocking his thirst, while they pretended to allay it.

But worst of all, I have one more thing to notice, they mocked *his prayers*. Did you ever read in all the annals of executions, or of murders, that ever men mocked their fellow-creatures prayers? I have read stories of some dastardly villains who have sought to slay their enemies, and seeing their death approaching the victims have said, “give me a moment or two for prayer”—and rare has been the cases when this has been disallowed. But I never read of a case in which when the prayer was uttered it has been laughed at, and made the object of a jest. But here hangs the Saviour, and every word he speaks becomes the subject of a pun, the motto of a jest. And when at the last he utters the most thrilling death-shriek that ever startled earth and hell, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,” even then they must pun upon it, and say, “he calleth for Elias, let us see whether Elias will come and take him down.” He was mocked even in his prayer. O Jesus! never was love like thine; never patience that could be compared with thy endurance when thou didst endure the cross, despising the shame.

I feel that in thus describing the Saviour's mockeries, I have not been able to set before you the fullness of the shame through which he passed, and shall have to attempt it yet, again, in another moment, when I come to describe his *shameful death*, taking the words which preceded the ones I have already enlarged upon. He endured the cross just as he did despise the shame.

The cross! the cross! When you hear that word it wakens in your hearts no thoughts of shame. There are other forms of capital punishment in the present day far more disgraceful than the cross. Connected with the guillotine there is much with the block as much, with the gallows, most of all. But, remember, that although to speak of the gallows is to utter a word of ignominy, yet there is nothing of shame in the term “gallows,” compared with the shame of the cross, as it was understood in the days of Christ. We are told that crucifixion was a punishment to which none could be put

but a slave, and, even then, the crime must have been of the most frightful character—such as the betrayal of a master, the plotting his death, or murdering him—only such offenses would have brought crucifixion, even, upon a slave. It was looked upon as the most terrible and frightful of all punishments. All the deaths in the world are preferable to this; they have all some slight alleviating circumstance, either their rapidity or their glory. But this is the death of a villain, of a murderer, of an assassin,—a death painfully protracted, one which cannot be equalled in all inventions of human cruelty, for suffering and ignominy. Christ himself endured this. The cross, I say, is in this day no theme of shame. It has been the crest of many a monarch, the banner of many a conqueror. To some it is an object of adoration. The finest engravings, the most wonderful paintings, have been dedicated to this subject. And now, the cross engraven on many a gem has become a right, royal, and noble thing. And we are unable at this day, I believe, fully to understand the shame of the cross; but the Jew knew it, the Roman knew it, and Christ knew what a frightful thing, what a shameful thing it was to be put to the death of crucifixion.

Remember, too, that in the Saviour's case, there were special aggravations of this shame. He had to carry his own cross; he was crucified, too, at the common place of execution, Calvary, analogous to our ancient Tyburn, or our present Old Bailey. He was put to death, too, at a time when Jerusalem was full of people. It was at the feast of the Passover, when the crowd had greatly increased, and when the representatives of all nations would be present to behold the spectacle. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Greece, ay, and perhaps far-off Tarshish, and the islands of the sea. All were there to unite in this scoffing, and to increase the shame. And he was crucified between two thieves, as if to teach that he was viler than they. Was ever shame like this?

Let me conduct you to the cross. The cross, the cross! Tears begin to flow at the very thoughts of it. The rough wood is laid upon the ground, Christ is flung upon his back, four soldiers seize his hands and feet, his blessed flesh his rent with the accursed iron; he begins to bleed, he is lifted into mid-air, the cross is dashed into the place prepared for it, every limb is dislocated, every bone put out of joint by that terrific jerk; he hangs there naked to his shame, gazed upon by all beholders, the sun shines hot upon him, fever begins to burn, the tongue is dried up like a potsherd, it cleaveth to the roof of his mouth, he hath not wherewith to nourish nature with moisture. His body has been long emaciated by fasting, he has been brought near the brink of death by flagellation in the hall of Pilate. There he hangs, the tenderest part of his body, his hands and feet are pierced, and where the nerves are most numerous and tender, there is the iron rending and tearing its fearful way. The weight of his body drags the iron up his foot, and when his knees are so weary that they cannot hold him, then the iron begins to drag through his hands. Terrible spectacle indeed! But you have seen only the outward, there was an inward, you cannot see that: if you could see, it though your eyes were like the angels, you would be smitten with eternal blindness. Then there was the soul. The soul dying. Can you guess what must be the pangs of a soul dying? A soul never died on earth yet. Hell is the place of dying souls, where they die everlastingly the second death. And there was within the ribs of Christ's body, hell itself poured out. Christ's soul was enduring the conflict with all the powers of hell, whose malice was aggravated by the fact, that it was the last battle they should ever be able to fight with him. Nay, worse than that. He had lost that which is the martyr's strength and shield, he had lost the presence of his God, God himself was putting his hand upon him; it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief, he hath made his soul a sacrifice for sin. God, in whose countenance Christ had everlastingly seemed himself, basking in delight,

concealed his face. And there was Jesus forsaken of God and man, left alone to tread the winepress, nay, to be trodden in the wine-press, and dip his vesture in his own blood. Oh, was there ever grief like this! No love can picture it. If I had a thought in my heart concerning the suffering of Christ, it should excoriate my lips ere I uttered it. The agonies of Jesus were like the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, heated seven times hotter than ever human suffering was heated before. Every vein was a road for the hot feet of pain to travel in; every nerve a string in a harp of agony that thrilled with the discordant wail of hell. All the agonies that the damned themselves can endure were thrust into the soul of Christ. He was a target for the arrows of the Almighty, arrows dipped in the poison of our sin; all the billows of the Eternal dashed upon this rock of our salvation. He must be bruised, trodden, crushed, destroyed, his soul must be exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

But I must pause, I cannot describe it. I can creep over it, and you can too. The rocks rent when Jesus died, our hearts must be made of harder marble than the rocks themselves if they do not feel. The temple rent its gorgeous veil of tapestry, and will not ye be mourners too? The sun itself had one big tear in its own burning eye, which quenched its light; and shall not we weep; we for whom the Saviour died? Shall not we feel an agony of heart that he should thus have endured for us?

Mark, my friends, that all the shame that came on Christ he despised. He counted it so light compared with the joy which was set before him, that he is said to have despised it. As for his sufferings, he could not despise them, that word could not be used in connection with the cross for the cross was too awful for even Christ himself to *despise*. That he *endured*; the shame he could cast off, but the cross he must carry, and to it he must be nailed. "He endured the cross, despising the shame."

II. And now HIS GLORIOUS MOTIVE. What was that which made Jesus speak like this?—"For the joy that was set before him." Beloved, what was the joy? Oh, 'tis a thought must melt a rock, and make a heart of iron move; that the joy which was set before Jesus, was principally joy of saving you and me. I know it was the joy of fulfilling his Father's will—of sitting down on his Father's throne—of being made perfect through suffering; but still I know that this is the grand, great motive of the Saviour's suffering, the joy of saving us. Do you know what the joy is of doing good to others? If you do not I pity you, for of all joys which God has left in this poor wilderness, this is one of the sweetest. Have you seen the hungry when they have wanted bread for many an hour,—have you seen them come to your house almost naked, their clothes having been thrust away that they might get money upon them to find them bread? Have you heard the woman's story of the griefs of her husband? Have you listened when you have heard the tale of imprisonment, of sickness, of cold, or hunger, of thirst, and have you never said, "I will clothe you, I will feed you." Have you never felt that joy divine, when your gold has been given to the poor, and your silver has been dedicated to the Lord, when you bestowed it upon the hungry, and you have gone aside and said, "God forbid that I should be self-righteous;" but I do feel it is worth living for to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and to do good to my poor suffering fellow creatures. Now, this is the joy which Christ felt, it was the joy of feeding us with the bread of heaven—the joy of clothing poor, naked sinners in his own righteousness—the joy of finding mansions in heaven for homeless souls,—of delivering us from the prison of hell, and giving us the eternal enjoyments of heaven.

But why should Christ look on us? Why should he choose to do this to us? Oh my friends, we never deserved anything at his hands. As a good old writer says "When I look at the crucifixion of Christ, I recollect that my sins put him to death. I see not Pilate, but I see myself in Pilate's place,

bartering Christ for honor. I hear not the cry of the Jews, but I hear my sins yelling out, 'Crucify, him, crucify him.' I see not iron nails, but I see my own iniquities fastening him to the cross. I see no spear, but I behold my unbelief piercing his poor wounded side,

'For you, my sins, my cruel sins, his chief tormentors were;
Each of my sins became a nail, and unbelief the spear.'"

It is the opinion of the Romanist, that the very man who pierced Christ's side was afterwards converted, and became a follower of Jesus. I do not know whether that is the fact, but I know it is the case spiritually. I know that we have pierced the Saviour, I know that we have crucified him; and yet, strange to say, the blood which we fetched from those holy veins has washed us from our sins, and hath made us accepted in the beloved. Can you understand this. Here is manhood mocking the Saviour, parading him through the streets, nailing him to a cross, and then sitting down to mock at his agonies. And yet what is there in the heart of Jesus but love to them? He is weeping all this while that they should crucify him, not so much because he felt the suffering, though that was much, but because he could bear the thought that men whom he loved could nail him to the tree. "That was the unkindest stab of all." You remember that remarkable story of Julius Caesar, when he was struck by his friend Brutus. "When the noble Caesar saw him stab, ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms, quite vanquished him! Then burst his mighty heart." Now Jesus had to endure the stab in his inmost bowels, and to know that his elect did it—that his redeemed did it, that his own church was his murderer—that his own people nailed him to the tree? Can you think, beloved, how strong must have been the love that made him submit even to this. Picture yourself to-day going home from this hall. You have an enemy who all his life long has been your enemy. His father was your enemy, and he is your enemy too. There is never a day passes but you try to win his friendship; but he spits upon your kindness, and curses your name. He does injury to your friends, and there is not a stone he leaves unturned to do you plumage. As you are going home to-day, you see a house on fire; the flames are raging, and the smoke is ascending up in one black column to heaven. Crowds gather in the street, and you are told there is a man in the upper chamber who must be burnt to death. No one can save him. You say, "Why that is my enemy's house;" and you see him at the window. It is your own enemy—the very man; he is about to be burnt. Full of lovingkindness, you say, "I will save that man if I can." He sees you approach the house; he puts his head from the window and curses you. "An everlasting blast upon you!" he says; "I would rather perish than that you should save me." Do you imagine yourself then, dashing through the smoke, and climbing the blazing staircase to save him; and can you conceive that when you get near him he struggles with you, and tries to roll you in the flames? Can you conceive your love to be so potent, that you can perish in the flames rather than leave him to be burned? You say, "I could not do it; it is above flesh and blood to do it." But Jesus did it. We hated him, we despised him, and, when he came to save us, we rejected him. When his Holy Spirit comes into our hearts to strive with us, we resist him; but he will save us; nay, he himself braved the fire that he might snatch us as brands from eternal burning. The joy of Jesus was the joy of saving sinners. The great motive, then, with Christ, in enduring all this, was, that he might save us.

III. And now, give me just a moment, and I will try and hold the Saviour up for OUR IMITATION. I speak now to Christians—to those who have tasted and handled of the good word of life. Christian men! if Christ endured all this, merely for the joy of saving you, will you be ashamed of bearing anything for Christ? The words are on my lips again this morning,—

"If on my face for thy dear name, shame and reproach shall be,

I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame, my Lord, I'll die for thee."

Oh! I do not wonder that the martyrs died for such a Christ as this! When the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts, then we feel that if the stake were present we would stand firmly in the fire to suffer for him who died for us. I know our poor unbelieving hearts would soon begin to quail at the crackling faggot and the furious heat. But surely this love would prevail over all our unbelief: Are there any of you who feel that if you follow Christ you must lose by it, lose your station, or lose your reputation? Will you be laughed at, if you leave the world and follow Jesus? Oh! and will you turn aside because of these little things when he would not turn aside, though all the world mocked him, till he could say "It is finished." No, by the grace of God, let every Christian lift his hands to the Most High God, to the maker of heaven and earth, and let him say within himself,

"Now for the love I bear his name, what was my gain I count my loss,

I pour contempt on all my shame, and nail my glory to his cross."

"For me to live is Christ; to die is gain," Living I will be his, dying I will be his; I will live to his honor, serve him wholly, if he will help me, and if he needs, I will die for his name's sake.

[Mr. Spurgeon was so led out under the first head, that he was unable from want of time to touch upon the other points. May what was blessed to the hearer be sweet to the reader.]

Hypocrisy

A Sermon

(No. 237)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 6th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”—Luke 12:1.

This age is full of shams. Pretence never stood in so eminent a position as it does at the present hour. There be few, I fear, who love the naked truth; we can scarce endure it in our houses; you would scarcely trade with a man who absolutely stated it. If you walked through the streets of London, you might imagine that all the shops were built of marble, and that all the doors were made of mahogany and woods of the rarest kinds; and yet you soon discover that there is scarce a piece of any of these precious fabrics to be found anywhere, but that everything is grained, and painted, and varnished. I find no fault with this, except as it is an outward type of an inward evil that exists. As it is in our streets, so is it everywhere; graining, painting, and gilding, are at an enormous premium. Counterfeit has at length attained to such an eminence that it is with the utmost difficulty that you can detect it. The counterfeit so near approacheth to the genuine, that the eye of wisdom itself needs to be enlightened before she can discern the difference. Specially is this the case in religious matters. There was once an age of intolerant bigotry, when every man was weighed in the balance, and if he was not precisely up to the orthodox standard of the day, the fire devoured him; but in this age of charity, and of most proper charity, we are very apt to allow the counterfeit to pass current, and to imagine that outward show is really as beneficial as inward reality. If ever there was a time when it was needful to say, “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy,” it is now. The minister may cease to preach this doctrine in the days of persecution: when the faggots are blazing, and when the rack is in full operation, few men will be hypocrites. These are the keen detectors of impostures; suffering, and pain, and death, for Christ’s sake, are not to be endured by mere pretenders. But in this silken age, when to be religious is to be respectable, when to follow Christ is to be honored, and when godliness itself has become gain, it is doubly necessary that the minister should cry aloud, and lift up his voice like a trumpet against this sin, “the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

I am sure that every true child of God will stand at times in doubt of himself, and his fear will probably take the shape of a suspicion concerning his own state.

He that never doubted of his state,

He may—perhaps he may—too late.

The Christian, however, does not belong to that class. He will at times begin to be terribly alarmed, lest, after all, his godliness should be but seeming, and his profession an empty vanity. He who is true will sometimes suspect himself of falsehood, while he who is false will wrap himself up in a constant confidence of his own sincerity. My dear Christian brethren, if you are at this time in doubt concerning yourselves, the truths to utter will, perhaps, help you in searching your own heart and trying your own reins, and sure I am you will not blame me if I should seem to be severe, but you will rather say, “Sir, I desire to make sure work concerning my own soul, tell me faithfully

and tell me honestly what are the signs of a hypocrite, and I will sit down and try to read my own heart, to discover whether these things have a bearing upon me, and happy shall I be if I shall come out of the fire like pure gold.”

We shall note, then, this morning, first, *the character of a hypocrite*; then we shall try to *cast up his accounts for him*, with regard to his loss or gain; and then we shall offer *a cure for hypocrisy*, which, if constantly carried about with us, will certainly prevent us from attempting to deceive. The cure is contained in these words which follow the text—“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

I. First, THE HYPOCRITE’S CHARACTER. We have an elaborate description of the hypocrite in the chapter we have just read, the twenty-third of Matthew, and I do not know that I can better pourtray him than by turning again to the words of Christ.

A hypocrite may be known by the fact that *his speech and his actions are contrary to one another*. As Jesus says, “they say and they do not.” The hypocrite can speak like an angel, he can quote texts with the greatest rapidity; he can talk concerning all matters of religion, whether they be theological doctrines, metaphysical questions, or experimental difficulties. In his own esteem he knoweth much and when he rises to speak, you will often feel abashed at your own ignorance in the presence of his superior knowledge. But see him when he comes to actions. What behold you there? The fullest contradiction of everything that he has uttered. He tells to others that they must obey the law: doth he obey it? Ah! no. He declares that others must experience this, that, and the other, and he sets up a fine scale of experience, far above even that of the Christian himself; but does he touch it? No, not with so much as one of his fingers. He will tell others what they should do; but will he remember his own teaching? Not he! Follow him to his house; trace him to the market, see him in the shop, and if you want to refute his preaching you may easily do it from his own life. My hearer! is this thy case? Thou art a member of a church, a deacon, a minister. Is this thy case? Is thy life a contradiction to thy words? Do thy hands witness against thy lips? How stands it with thee? With a blush, each one of us must confess that, to some extent, our life is contradictory to our profession. We blush and we mourn over this. But I hope there are some here who can say, “Notwithstanding many infirmities, with my whole heart have I striven to run in the ways of thy commandments, O my God, and I have not intentionally spoken that with my lip which I did not intend to carry out in my life.” Ah! believe me, my hearers, *talk* is easy, but *walk* is hard: *speech* any man may attain unto, but *act* is difficult. We must have grace within to make our life holy; but lip-piety needs no grace. The first mark of a hypocrite, then, is, that he contradicts by his acts what he utters by his words. Do any of you do so? If so, stand convicted of hypocrisy, and bow your heads, and confess the sin.

The next mark of a hypocrite is, that whenever he does right *it is that he may be seen of men*. The hypocrite sounds a trumpet before his alms, and chooses the corner of the streets for his prayers. To him virtue in the dark is almost a vice, he can never detect any beauty in virtue, unless she has a thousand eyes to look upon her, and then she is something indeed. The true Christian, like the nightingale, sings in the night; but the hypocrite has all his songs in the day, when he can be seen and heard of men. To be well spoken of is the very elixir of his life; if he be praised, it is like sweet wine to him. The censure of man upon a virtue would make him change his opinion concerning it in a moment; for his standard is the opinion of his fellow creatures, his law is the law of self-seeking,

and of self-honoring: he is virtuous, because to be virtuous is to be praised; but if tomorrow vice were at a premium he would be as vicious as the rest. Applause is what too many are seeking after. They eschew all secret religion, and only live where men may behold them. Now, is this our case? Let us deal honestly with ourselves; if we distribute to the poor, do we desire to do it in secret, when no tongue shall tell? Are our prayers offered in our closets, where God who heareth the cry of the secret ones, listeneth unto our supplication? Can we say, that if every man were struck stone blind and deaf and dumb, we would not alter our conduct the least? Can we declare that the opinion of our fellows is not our guiding law, but that we stand servants to our God and to our conscience, and are not to be made do a wrong thing from flattery, nor are we urged to do a right thing from fear of censure? Mark, the man who does not act rightly from a higher motive than that of being praised, gives sore suspicion that he is a hypocrite, but he who will do a right thing against the opinion of every man, and simply because he believes it to be right, and sees the stamp of God's approval upon it, that man need not be afraid that he is a hypocrite; he would be a kind of hypocrite that one has never discovered as yet. Hypocrites do their good works for applause. Is it so with you? If so, be honest, and as you would convict another convict yourself.

Again; hypocrites *love titles, and honors, and respect from men*. The pharisee was never so happy as when he was called Rabbi, he never felt himself so really great as when he was stuck up in the highest seat in the synagogue. Then he must be good indeed. But the true Christian cares not for titles. It is one of the marks of Christians—that they have generally taken names of abuse to be their distinctive appellations. There was a time when the term *methodist* was abusive. What did those good men say who had it so applied to them? “You call us methodists by way of abuse, do you? It shall be our title.” The name “Puritan” was the lowest of all; it was the symbol which was always employed by the drunkard and swearer to express a godly man. “Well,” says the godly man, “I will be called a puritan; if that is a name of reproach I will take it.” It has been so with the Christian all the world over. He has chosen for himself the name which his enemy has given him in malice. Not so the hypocrite. He takes that which is the most honorable; he wishes always to be thought to belong to the most respectable sect, and to hold an office in that sect which will confer upon him the most honorable title. How, can you say from your inmost soul, that in religion you are not seeking for honors or titles, but that you can tread these beneath your feet, and want no higher degree than that of a sinner saved by grace and no greater honor than to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of him? Are you willing to be the despised followers of the carpenter's son, as were the fishermen upon the lake? If so, methinks, you have but little hypocrisy in you; but if you only follow him because you are honored by men, farewell to the sincerity of your religion, you are unmasked, and stand before the face of this congregation an acknowledged hypocrite.

There was another evidence of an hypocrite which was equally good, namely, that *he strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel*. Hypocrites in these days do not find fault with us for eating with unwashed hands, but they still fix upon some ceremonial omission. Sabbatarianism has furnished hypocrisy with an extremely convenient refuge. Acts of necessity done by the Christian, are the objects of the sanctimonious horror of Pharisees, and labors of mercy and smiles of joy, are damning sins in the esteem of hypocrites, if done upon a Sunday. Though our Father worked hitherto, and Christ worked, and though works of kindness, and mercy, and charity, are the duty of the Sabbath: yet if the Christian be employed in these, he is thought to be offending against God's holy law. The slightest infringement of that which is a ceremonial observance becomes a great sin in the eye of the hypocrite. But he, poor man, who will find fault with you for some little thing in this respect,

straining at a gnat, is the man you will find cheating, adulterating his goods, lying, puffing, and grinding the poor. I have always noticed that those very particular souls who look out for little things, who are always searching out little points of difference, are just the men who omit the weightier matters of the law, and while they are so particular about the tithe of mint, and annis, and cummin; whole loads of tithe-wheat are smuggled into their own barns. Always suspect yourself when you are more careful about little than about great things. If you find it hurts your conscience more to be absent from the communion than to cheat a widow, rest quite assured that you are wrong. The Thug, you know, thinks it a very proper thing to murder all he can; but if a little of the blood of his victims should stain his lips, then he goes off to the priest, and says he has committed a great sin; the blood has been on his lips—what must he do to get the sin forgiven? And there are many people of the same class in England. If they should do anything on a Good Friday, or on Christmas-day, poor souls, it is awfully wicked; but if they should be lazy all the six days of the week, it no sin at all. Rest ye assured, that the man who strains at a gnat but yet so allows the camel, is a deceiver. Mark you, my dear friends, I like you to strain at the gnats; I have no objection to that at all—only do not swallow the camel afterwards. Be as particular as you like about right and wrong. If you think a thing is a little wrong, it is wrong to you. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” If you cannot do it, believing yourself to be right in not doing it, though another man could do it and do right, yet to you it would not be right. Strain the gnats; they are not good things in your wines, strain them out; it is well to get rid of them; but then do not open your mouth and swallow a camel afterwards, for if you do that, you will give no evidence that you are a child of God, but prove that you are a damnable hypocrite.

But read on in this chapter, and you will find that these people *neglected all the inward part of religion, and only observed the outward*. As our Saviour said, they “made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess.” There are many books which are excellently bound, but there is nothing within them; and there are many persons that have a very one spiritual exterior, but there is nothing whatever in the heart. Do you not know some of them? Perhaps if you know yourself you may discover one. Do you not know some who are precisely religious who would scarce omit attending to a single means of grace, who practice the ritual in all its forms and all its ceremonies, who would not turn aside as much as a hair’s breadth from any outward command? Before the world they stand as eminently pious, because they are minutely attentive to the externals of the sanctuary; but yet they are careless of the inward matter. So long as they take the bread and wine they are not careful about whether they have eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of Christ; so long as they have been baptized with water they are not careful whether they have been buried with Christ in baptism unto death. So long as they have been up to the house of God they are satisfied. It is nothing to them whether they have had communion with Christ, or not. No, they are perfectly content, so long as they have the shell, without looking for the kernel; the wheat may go where it pleases—the husk, and the chaff and the straw, are quite sufficient and enough for them. Some people I know of are like inns, which have an angel hanging outside for a sign, but they have a devil within for a landlord. There are many men of that kind; they take good care to have an excellent sign hanging out, they must be known by all men to be strictly religious; but within, which is the all-important matter, they are full of wickedness. But I have sometimes heard persons mistake this matter. They say, “Ah! well, poor men, he is a sad drunkard, certainly, but he is a very good-hearted man at bottom.” Now, as Rowland Hill used to say, that is a most astonishing thing for any man to say of another, that he was bad at top and good at bottom. When

men take their fruit to market they cannot make their customers believe, if they see rotten apples at the top, that there are good ones at the bottom. A man's outward conduct is generally a little better than his heart. Very few men sell better goods than they put in the window. Therefore, do not misunderstand me. When I say we must attend more to the inward than the outward, I would not have you leave the outward to itself. "Make clean the outside of the cup and platter"—make it as clean as you can, but take care also that the inward is made clean. Look to that first. Ask thyself such questions as these—"Have I been born again? Am I passed from darkness to light? Have I been brought out of the realms of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son? Do I live by private communion near to the side of Jesus? Can I say that my heart panteth after the Lord, even as the hart does alter the water-brooks? For if I cannot say this, whatever my outward life may be, I am self-deceived and deceive others, and the woe of the hypocrite falls upon me. I have made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but the inward part is very wickedness. Does that come home to any of you? Is this personal preaching? Then God be blessed for it. May the truth be the death of your delusions.

You may know a hypocrite by another sign. *His religion depends upon the place, or upon the time of day.* He rises at seven o'clock perhaps, and you will find him religious for a quarter of an hour; for he is, as the boy said, "saying his prayers to himself" in the first part of the morning. Well, then you find him pretty pious for another half-hour, for there is family prayer; but when the business begins, and he is talking to his men, I won't guarantee that you will be able to admire him. If one of his servants has been doing something a little amiss, you will find him perhaps using angry and unworthy language. You will find him too, if he gets a customer whom he thinks to be rather green, not quite pious, for he will be taking him in. You will find, too, that if he sees a good chance at any hour of the day, he will be very ready to do a dirty trick. He was a saint in the morning, for there was nothing to be lost by it; but he has a religion that is not too strict; business is business, he says, and he puts religion aside by stretching his conscience, which is made of very elastic material. Well, some time in the evening you will find him very pious again, unless he is out on a journey, where neither wife, nor family, nor church can see him, and you will find him at a theater. He would not go if there was a chance of the minister hearing of it, for then he would be excommunicated, but he does not mind going when the eye of the church or of any of his friends is not upon him. Fine clothes make fine gentlemen, and fine places make fine hypocrites; but the man who is true to his God and to his conscience, is a Christian all day, and all night long, and a Christian everywhere. "Though you were to fill my house full of silver and gold," he says, "I would not do a dirty action; though you should give me the stars and the countless wealth of empires, yet I would not do that which would dishonor God, or disgrace my profession." Put the true Christian where he might sin, and be praised for it, and he will not do it. He does not hate sin for the sake of the company, but he hates it for its own sake. He says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" You shall find him a fallible man, but not a false man, you shall find him full of infirmities, but not of intentional lust and of designed iniquity. As a Christian, you must follow Christ in the mire as well in the meads; you must walk with him in the rain as well as in the sunshine, you must go with him in the storm as well as in fair weather. He is no Christian who cannot walk with Christ, come rags, come poverty, come contumely or shame. He is the hypocrite who can walk with Christ in silver slippers and leave him when it becomes necessary for him to go barefoot. The hypocrite's religion is like a chameleon, it takes its color from the light which falls upon it, but the Christian's religion is evermore the same. Is this true then of any of us? Can we say we desire to be evermore

the same? Or do we change with our company and with the times? If so, we are hypocrites confessed, and let us own it before God, and may God make us sincere.

There is another sign of the hypocrite, and now the lash will fall on my own back, and on most of us too. Hypocrites, and other people besides hypocrites, *are generally severe with others, and very lenient with themselves*. Have you ever heard a hypocrite describe himself? I describe him thus:—you are a mean, beggarly fellow. “No,” says he, “I am not; I am economical.” I say to him, “You are dishonest, you are a thief.” “No,” says he, “I am only cute and sharp for the times.” “Well, but,” I say to him, “you are proud and conceited.” “Oh!” says he, “I have only a proper and manly respect.” “Ay, but you are a fawning, cringing fellow.” “No,” says he, “I am all things to all men.” Somehow or other he will make vice look like a virtue in himself, but he will deal by the reverse rule with others. Show him a Christian who is really humble, and he says, “I hate his fawning ways.” Tell him there is one who is very courageous for Christ; “Oh! he is impudent,” says he. Show him one who is liberal, doing what he can for his Master’s service, spending, and being spent for him; “Rash and imprudent,” says he, “extravagant; the man does not know what he is about.” You may point out a virtue, and the hypocrite shall at once say it is a vice. Have you ever seen a hypocrite turn doctor? He has a fine beam in his eye, large enough to shut out the light of heaven from his soul, but nevertheless he is a very skillful oculist. He waits upon some poor brother, whose eye is a little affected with a mote so tiny that the full blaze of the sun can scarce reveal it. Look at our beam-eyed friend, he puts on a knowing look, and cries, “Allow me to extract this mote for you?” “Thou hypocrites first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” There are people of that sort who make virtues in others into vices, and vices in themselves they transform into virtues. Now, if thou be a Christian, I will tell thee what will be thy spirit, it will be the very reverse; thou wilt be always making excuses for others, but thou wilt never be making excuses for thyself. The true Christian, if he sees himself sin, mourns over it, and makes much ado concerning it. He says to another, “Oh! I feel so sinful;” and the other one cries “I cannot really see it; I can see no sin in you; I could wish I were holy as you.” “No,” says the other, “but I am full of infirmity.” John Bunyan describes Mercy, and Christiana, and the children, after having been washed in the bath, and sealed with the seal, as coming up out of the water, and being all fair and lovely to look upon; and one began to say to the other, “You are fairer than I!” and “You are more comely than I!” said another. And then each began to bemoan their own spots, and to praise the beauty of the others. That is the spirit of a Christian; but the spirit of the hypocrite is the very reverse; he will judge, and condemn, and punish with lynch-law every other man; and as for himself, he is exempt, he is a king, he knows no law, and his conscience slumbers and allows him to go on easily in the very sins which he condemns in others. This is a very prominent mark of the hypocrite, and I question whether all of us must not blame ourselves a little here.

II. And now we are going to CAST UP THE HYPOCRITE’S ACCOUNT FOR HIM. Now, sir, bring us your ledger, and let us have a look at it. You are a hypocrite. Well, what is on the profit side? A good deal, I must confess. Here is, first of all credit and honor. If you were to say outright, “You are a thief, you are a private drunkard, you can curse God as well as any man;” or if the world should hear as much, you would have no honor; but as it is you have joined the church, and the minister is very fond of you, the deacons and elders think a great deal of you, and you are a very honorable, respectable man. You go walking up to your pew with your Bible and your hymn book, and everybody says, “There is an exemplary character;” and they pat their little boys on the head,

and say, "May you grow up to be a very good man like Mr. So-and-so." The next advantage is the case which you enjoy. The minister often preaches a solemn, thundering sermon against sin. You get off all that; you are not a sinner, are you? not at all; who would suspect you? You are one of the brightest of the saints; it is almost a pity you were not one of the twelve; there was one amongst them almost as good as yourself, and his end will probably be yours. You escape every thunder of the law; your conscience rests easy, and the very thing which makes the child of God tremble, puffs you up, and the very marks and evidences which cast him down, help to exalt you. The sun of the gospel which melts wax, hardens the poor clay of your hearts, and you get the more exalted in your self-conceit through everything you hear. And that is good too, is it not? very much in your favor, certainly. And then there is another thing. How nicely your shop has prospered through it; that, perhaps, is the part of the bargain which you like the best. Ever since you have made a profession of religion, have not those who go to your church and chapel traded with you? You would not have got on half so well if you had been suspected to be what you really are, but because of that fine cloak of yours, that fine garment of hypocrisy, how nicely you have prospered! What a nice little round sum you have been able to lay by, have you not? All that is the bright side again. And besides that, what honors have you not received in the church. Are not you made a deacon, or an elder; ay, perhaps a minister too: how pleasant that is! And you puff yourself up, and you feel satisfied. "Oh, what a good man am I, other people think I am, therefore I must be. It is true I devour the widow's house; it is true I am not very particular about what I do; nevertheless the minister, the elders, the deacons think me good, the whole church applauds me; they cannot all be mistaken; surely I must be a special saint." That is your profit side of the account, what about the other side? I think we shall be able to strike a balance that will not be much in your favor, sir.

In the first place, I see a black item down here. Some of the people of the world do not think quite as much of you, as you imagine. The poor widow does not give you much of a character. You will have to be very careful sir, or your base deeds will come out. The very first item I see down here, is a fear that your hypoerisy will be discovered. It would take you only half as much trouble to be an honest man as it does to be a deceiver. A man who is in the habit of speaking truth, need not mind how he opens his mouth, nor where; but a man who lies, should be very careful, and have a very good memory, and recollect all he has ever said before, lest he should trip himself. So it is with you my friend, your religion is a Sunday religion, and you have to be very careful, so as to make Monday dealings hold their tongues and Sunday doings vow as fond as they can. Hard work! I would not stand in your place to have all the trepidation and fear of discovery which so often comes upon you. No, I would sooner be a worldling, than I would have the fear that constantly haunts you, lest you should stand ashamed before the Church by your base iniquity being discovered. But I see something worse than this, here is constant disquietude of conscience; hypocrites may seem as if they were at ease but they cannot really be. The Christian who is true to God, and is really his child, can sometimes say, "I know that Jesus has taken away my sin." Assurance, vouchsafed to him by the Spirit, calms his fears and he can rest in Christ. But the highest presumption to which the hypocrite can attain, brings no such calm as that which is breathed upon the Christian by the lips of assurance. He can go to his bed, nay, he can go to his tomb in peace, but the hypocrite is afraid of a shadow, and fleeth when no man pursueth.

And last of all, Mr. Hypocrite, I see an item here which you usually forget, it is this—that despite of your profession God abhors you, and if there is one man more than another who stinks in the nostrils of Jehovah, it is such as thou art—thou miserable pretender. There shall be a special

place reserved for thee amongst the damned. Think man what shall be thy misery when thy secret deeds of iniquity are read before an assembled universe, and men and angels utter one unanimous hiss against thee. What shall it be when the mask is torn off thee when the masquerade of thy hypocrisy is done and thou art stripped naked to thy shame, to be observed of all and to be despised of all? What sayest thou to this? Shalt thou go from thy deaconship, or from thy ministry, to be among the devils in hell? Shalt thou go from the sacramental table to drink the sulphurous cup of torment? Shalt thou descend from the song of the sanctuary and from the house of God to the abode of fiends and to the wailing of the damned? Yes, thou shalt as sure as this word is true, if thou goest on in thy hypocrisy, Death shall find thee out, and hell shall be thy doom, for the hope of the hypocrite is as the spider's web, soon swept away; and where is he when God taketh away his hope?

This then is the casting up of the hypocrite's account, and there is a deficit of an infinite amount.

III. Now for the matter of the CURE OF THE HYPOCRITE. What shall we say to it? Oh! my friends, I feel that in thus speaking of the hypocrite, I have tried to speak severely, but I have not been able to reach the heart as I could wish, because it is a mark of human nature that this is the last sin of which we really suspect ourselves, and yet one into which it is most easy to fall. Often do I fall on my knees in an agony of doubt, and cry, "Lord, make me sincere; if I be deceived, undeceive me." I do not think that any Christian will live long without some such seasons of anguishing self-examination. Let me put it to you today, let no one exempt himself. You may have been professing Christians for many years, and yet you may have been hypocrites. Remember there was a hypocrite among the apostles, so may there be among the ministers of Christ. There have been deceivers among the apostolic churches, how much more may we expect them among us. Do not look around to find them out, it is God's business not yours, to find out hypocrites; but look at yourselves to see whether you are not one. Driving along the other day in the wind I observed a great branch fall just in front of me. I remarked that it was rotten, and wondered within myself how long that might have been upon the tree, and yet have been rotten after all. Then I thought, "Oh! if the wind of persecution were to sweep through the church, should I fall off like a rotten branch? Would not many of my hearers fall off? They have been united to Christ professedly for a long time, and have spoken for him, perhaps preached for him, but if the time of trial, which shall try the earth, should come upon us again, how many of us would stand? Oh! my hearers do not be content to take your religion at second-hand; let it not be a superficial work. Do not think that because you have seen me and have seen my elders, and we have admitted you into the church, you are therefore all right. We have been deceived many times; it is not hard work to deceive a kind heart. I have looked into the eyes of some, and have tried to read their very soul, and yet I have misjudged; I have seen tears in their eyes while they have made a profession of Christ, and yet they have been deceivers after all, and I have been very grossly taken in. In fact, the more kind-hearted a man is the more will human nature endeavor to impose upon him. I am certain I have used the utmost diligence to weed out of my church those whom I have suspected of hypocrisy, and greater diligence shall yet be used. But, oh, do deal with yourselves, I beseech you. I will not send you to hell blind-folded if I can help it; I do not wish to be in error myself, and God forbid that I should suffer you to be deceived. Oh! if you be not true Christians, away with your profession altogether. If it be not sound work, down with it. Better see the house tumble now, than let it stand till the rain descends and the floods come, and the winds beat upon it in the dread eternity of the future. Oh, no, I would rather send every heart home uncomfortable than let the hypocrite sit down at ease; I would rather wound the child of God than allow the hypocrite to escape.

But now for the cure of the hypocrite. What shall we do to cure ourselves of any hypocrisy that may exist among us? Let us recollect that we cannot do anything in secret even if we try. The all-seeing God, apprehended in the conscience, must be the death of hypocrisy. I cannot try to deceive when I know that God is looking at me. It is impossible for me to play double and false when I believe that I am in the presence of the Most High, and that he is reading my thoughts and the secret purposes of my heart. The only way in which the hypocrite can play the hypocrite at all is by forgetting the existence of God. Let us, therefore, recollect it—wherever I am, upon my bed or in my secret chamber, God is there. There is not a secret word I speak in the ear of a friend but God hears it. Do I seek out the most private part of the city for the commission of sin—God is there. Do I choose the shadow of night to cover my iniquity?—He is there looking upon me. The thought of a present Deity, if it were fully realized, would preserve us from sin; always looking on me, ever regarding me. We think we are doing many things in secret, but there is nothing concealed from him with whom we have to do. And the day is coming, when all the sins that we have committed shall be read and published. Oh! what a blush shall crimson the cheek of the hypocrite when God shall read the secret diary of his iniquity! O my fellow-professors, let us always look upon our actions in the light of the great outreaching of them in the day of judgment. Pause over everything you do, and say, “Can I bear to have this sounded with a trumpet in the ear of all men?” Nay, take a higher motive, and say, “Can I endure to do this and yet to repeat the words, ‘Thou God seest me.’” Ye may deceive men, and deceive yourselves, but God ye cannot, God ye shall not. Ye may die with the name of Christ upon your lips, and men may bury you in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but God shall not be deceived neither by your profession nor by men’s opinion. He shall put you in the scales, and if you be found wanting, he shall cry, “Away with him.” He shall ring you, and if you have not the ring of the pure coin of grace, he shall nail you down for ever as a counterfeit. He shall strip the mask off you. Virtue is most adorned, when unadorned the most. To detect you, you shall be stripped naked, and every cloak shall be torn to tatters. How will you endure this? Will ye dig into the depths to hide yourselves? Will ye plunge into the sea to find a way of escape? Will ye cry for the rocks to hide you, and the mountains to fall upon you? In vain shall you cry. The all-seeing God shall read your soul, shall discover your secret, shall reveal your hidden things, and tell the world that, though you did eat and drink in his streets, though you preached his name, yet he never knew you, you were still a worker of iniquity, and must be driven away for ever.

Come let us just for one second reflect, that we shall soon lie upon our death bed. A few more months, and you and I shall face the cruel tyrant, death. It will be hard work to play the hypocrite then; when the pulse is faint and few, when the eye-strings break, when the tongue is cleaving to the roof of your mouth, it will be in vain to try hypocrisy then. O may God make you sincere; for if you die with an empty profession, you die indeed. Of all deaths, methinks the most awful is that of the hypocrite, and after death, for him to lift up his eyes and find himself lost—and for ever! O make sure work of it. May God give you true grace and true faith, and may we all meet in heaven. This is our earnest prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reform

A Sermon

(No. 238)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 13th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all.”—2 Chronicles 31:1.

IT is a pleasant sight to behold the thousands assembled together for the worship of God, but it is lamentable to reflect, how often the reverence which is exhibited in the sanctuary is lost when the thresh-hold is passed. How frequently the most earnest address of the preacher is forgotten, and becomes as “the morning cloud, and as the early dew.” We very often go up to the house of God, and imagine that we have done our duty when we have gone through the round of the service: self-satisfied, we return each man to his home. Oh that we would remember that the preaching of the gospel is but the sowing! afterward the reaping must come. To-day we do, as it were, lay the first stone of an edifice; and henceforward that edifice must be built, stone by stone, through your daily practice, until at last the top-stone is brought forth with shoutings of joy and gladness. Well said the Scotch woman, when her husband asked her, on her return from the house of God sooner than usual, “Wife, is the sermon all done?” “Nay, Donald,” said she; “it is all *said*; but it is nae begun to be *done*.” There was wisdom in her pithy saying, a wisdom which we too frequently forget. Praying is the end of preaching. Reformation, conversion, regeneration—these are the ends of the ministry, and a holy life should be the result of your devout worship. We have read in your hearing the story of the great Passover, which was held in the days of Hezekiah. One almost envies the men of that, time; we might almost wish that we could be carried back some thousands of years, that we might have been there to see the solemn sacrifices, to behold the priests, as with joyous countenances they sang the praises of God, and to have mingled in that countless throng, which stood at one hour to listen to the Levite, at another hour gathered round the priest; again, at another season clapped their hands for joy at the sound of the golden trumpets, and then outvied the trumpets by the magnificent sound of their vocal praise. But, beloved, when that scene had vanished, and the multitude had gone to their homes, Hezekiah might have sat down and wept if there had not been a fitting effect from so great a gathering. Isaiah the prophet, I doubt not, was one of the gladdest in all the crowd. Oh, how his noble heart beat for joy, and how eloquent was his seraphic tongue when he preached among the people, and cried, “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.” But sad indeed would his heart have been, notwithstanding all the delightful excitement of the day, if he had not seen some glorious consequences result from the ministrations and from the great gatherings of the people. In our text we are informed, that the Passover did not end with the seven days twice-told of its extraordinary celebration. The Passover, it is true, might end, but not its blessed effects.

Now there are three effects which ought always to follow our solemn assembly upon the Lord's day, especially when we gather in such a number as the present, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving. We should go home and first *break our false gods*; next, *cut down the very groves in which we have been wont to delight*, and after that *break the altars which though dedicated to the God of Israel, are not according to Scripture*, and therefore ought to be broken down, albeit, they be even dedicated to the true God.

I. To begin then, the true result of all our gatherings should be, in the first place, to **BREAK TO PIECES ALL OUR IMAGES**. "Thou shalt have none other gods before me." Every place is before God. Every thing is before his face and open to him. Therefore by this command we understand that we are in no way, and in no sense to have another god, but the Lord our God. What! do you ask, are we a nation of idolaters? Can this text pertain to us? Would not this be a proper rebuke to address the Hindostanee, or to speak to the benighted inhabitants of the center of Africa? Might we not exhort them to serve Jehovah and to dash the gods of their fathers in pieces? Assuredly we might. But imagine not that idolatry is confined to nations of a swarthy hue. It is not in Africa alone that false gods are worshipped; idols are worshipped in this land also, and by many of you. Yea, all of us, until renewed by divine grace, worship gods which our own hands have made, and we do not fear, and love, and obey the living God with our entire and exclusive homage. Once however, let grace be received into the heart, let the soul be renewed by the Holy Spirit, once drink in the free life of Jesus, and these false gods must be broken in pieces at once.

The first god who is worshipped among us is one called *self-righteousness*. The Pharisees were the high priests of this god; they burnt incense every morning and every evening before him, but he has ten thousand times ten thousand worshippers still left. Among your respectable classes of society he is the received divinity. If a man be respectable, he thinks it all-sufficient. Among your moralists, this is the great god before which they bow down and worship. Nay, among sinners themselves, men whose character is not moral, there is, nevertheless, found an altar to this god within their hearts. I have known a drunkard self-righteous, for he has declared that he did not swear; and I have known a swearer self-righteous, for he trusted he should be saved because he did not steal. Until we are brought to know our own lost and ruined condition, self-righteousness is the god before which every one of us will prostrate ourselves. Oh, my dear friends, if we have worshipped God in this house to-day, let us go home determined to aim a blow, by the help of God, at self-righteousness; let us go home and prostrate ourselves before God, and cry—

"Vile and full of sin I am."

"Lord, I confess before thee, that I have no good works in which to trust, no self-righteousness on which I can rely. I cast my boastings away; I come to thee as a poor, guilty, helpless sinner; 'Lord, save, or I perish.'" That is the way to dash down this god. Paul once worshipped this mighty one, and worshipped him so well, that, after the "most straitest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee." Never, in his opinion, so good a man as himself. He served this god with all his mind, and soul, and strength. But, once upon a time, as he was going to Damascus to sacrifice to this god with the blood of believers in Christ, the Lord Jesus looked upon him out of heaven, and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Prostrate tell Saul, and down went his self-righteousness too. Afterwards, you might hear him say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." May we all go home thus, and pull down our self-righteousness. Stop a moment, I am not quite sure that we can do this all at once. My self-righteousness I feel in my own heart, as something like those colossal statues of Egypt,

and when I try to break it in pieces, I can but disfigure it; I manage to break a chip off here and a chip off there, but still there stands the statue, not in all its former symmetry, but still there. At any rate, if you and I cannot wholly get rid of our self-righteousness, let us never lay down the axe and the hammer until we have destroyed it. Let us go home to-day and have another blow at this old foe; let us go home to have another dash at the colossal god, and let us take up the chisel and the hammer, and once more try to disfigure him. This is the proper result of the ministrations of God's Word, to destroy and cut in pieces, and utterly break down our self-righteousness.

There are other gods still worshipped in this world, to be execrated with unrelenting indignation. There is one which is certain to be broken, so sure as ever a man becomes a Christian: I mean *Bacchus*, that jolly god whom so many adored in days of yore with mad revelry, and who is still worshipped by tens of thousands of Englishmen. Perhaps he is the great god of Britain. I am certain he has many temples, for there is scarcely a corner of any street in which we do not behold his image, or see his votaries pouring out libations before him. He is a god that is worshipped with reeling to and fro, and staggering. Men become drunken in his presence, and so do him homage. Now, ye that are drunkards, if ye become Christians, that will turn your cup bottom upwards once and for ever. There will be no more inebriety for you now. By the grace of God you will say, "They that be drunken are drunken in the night, but let us who are of the day be sober. I renounce this practice of drunkenness, I can have nothing more to do with it." Bless God there are many here present who have gone out of this hall to demolish this god. Oh! if it were right to relate the cases that have been told privately to us, we could tell you this very day, not of one, or two, or twenty but of hundreds, who, as we believe, once made their homes a hell, who treated their wives with brutality and their children with neglect; whose homes were empty, because every article they had was sold for accursed drink. They have heard the gospel not in word only, but also in power, and now their home is a paradise, their house is made glad with prayer, their children are brought up in the fear of the Lord. We have seen the wife's tear of gladness when she said, "The Lord be blessed for ever, and blessed be the name of the gospel, for a wretched woman has been made happy, and she who was but a drudge and a slave to one who was like a fiend, has now become the companion of one whom she reckons to be little short of an angel." Ay, may this be the effect with some of *you*, for there are some such here to-day, I doubt not, who still worship this all-degrading deity, the deity of drunkenness.

Let me tell you of another god, which is to be pulled down as certainly by any man who worships Jehovah aright, and that is the god of *lust*; Oh! this world is not so good as it seems to be. You scarcely hear the minister in these days talk of whoremongers, adulterers, and such like: but they are not all dead. There are such to be found, such in every congregation, I fear. Our streets have not yet become such as Chastity might pace at midnight, nor are the chief places of the earth become clean and purified. There is much hidden pollution to be dragged forth, and cast into Kishon. Even in high places, sin is tolerated, men are respectable who have sent their fellow-creatures to hell, and are going there themselves; but once let grace come into the heart, and away with these: the most darling lust is given up, and that which was thought to be the greatest pleasure, is now looked upon with abhorrence and detestation. If thou, my hearer, livest in lust, and yet dost make profession of religion, away with thy profession, for it is an awful lie. Away with that profession, for it is an empty vanity! away with it! It will but add to thy destruction, and cannot save thee from the dreadful doom of the man that goeth on in his iniquity. A happy thing it is for a man when he goes from the house of God, with the resolve that lust shall be abandoned, and every sinful pleasure cast away.

There are, too, the gods of *business*, but I must not touch upon them, of course. The minister has nothing to do with business, he is told. Keep your counting-house door bolted always, let not the minister inside. But the minister knows why he is shut out. Is it not because there are secrets of your prisonhouse which you would not have revealed? There are things done which pass for honest among tradesmen, that if put in the balance of the sanctuary are found very wanting. I would that the result of our preaching upon our hearers should be such that their actions should be more upright and their conduct more Christ-like in their daily business. I have heard of a woman who once went to hear a minister, and when he called to see her on the Monday, he asked her what the text was. She replied, "It was a blessed sermon to me, sir, but I forget the text." "Well, what was the subject, my good woman." "Oh! I do not know; I forget now." "Well," said he, "it cannot have done you any good then." "Yes it did," said she, "for though I forgot the sermon, I did not forget to burn my bushel when I got home." The fact was, she had a bushel that gave false measure to her customers, and although she forgot what the sermon was about, she did not forget to burn her false measure. If any of you are in business and have false measures, though you may forget what I say, do not forget to break your yard measure, and to have your weights set right, and to remodel your business, and "to do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." Break the gods of your business in pieces, if so be ye have not followed with your whole heart the statutes of the God of Israel. If you cannot serve God in your daily business, then give such business up, or alter it so that you can.

Say now, who is there among us who has not some image to break? I have thought sometimes that I had broken all mine at one season, for I have had the will to do it; but lo! I have walked through the temple of my heart, and I have seen in some dark corner an idol still standing. Let it be cast down, I have said; and I have used the sledge-hammer upon it. But when I thought I had cleared all away, there was still one gigantic figure standing there; for you may be sure that there is one idol of which we can never thoroughly cleanse our hearts though we try and though by God's strength we give him a blow every day. It is the god of *pride*. He changes his shape continually; sometimes he calls himself humility, and we begin to bow before him, till we find we are getting proud of our humility. At another time he assumes the fashion of conscientiousness, and we begin to carp at this and cavil at the other, and all the while we are tampering with our own professed sanctity, and are bowing before the shrine of religious pride. We think sometimes we are praising God when we are praising ourselves, and we pray at times that God may prosper us in doing good, and our greatest desire is to be honored, not that his name should be glorified. This idol must be cast down; but it is of such a form and such a shape, that I suppose it will fare like Dagon. When the ark was brought into the house, it is said Dagon fell upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord, and his head and the palms of his hands were cut off, nevertheless the stump of Dagon remained. So will it be with us, I fear the stump of Dagon will still remain, do what we may. Then let us each to day go home to our closet and begin to open the door of the chambers of our hearts, and walk through them all, and say "What have I to break, what have I to knock down, what have I to destroy;" and let us be very careful that we do destroy all that we can get near. Oh my hearers! how I wish we were more watchful of the effects produced in ourselves by preaching.

II. Let us now go a step further, and consider what it is to CUT DOWN THE GROVES. Groves are the places where those images have been set up. There was nothing, mark you, positively sinful in the grove. There could not be anything wrong in a cluster of trees. They were very beautiful—they were the work of God, but they had been used for an idolatrous purpose, and, therefore down they

must come. Had some of the lax professors of this age been present, they would have said, "Break the god,"—that is right enough. Hammer away at him, dash him to pieces, but don't cut down the trees. You may use them for very proper purposes. Why, you may even go there to pray. There you may sit and refresh yourself, and beneath their grateful shade you may even worship the true God. "Nay," say these reformers. "We will cut down the trees and all, because the images have been harboured under their covert," Now, I am going to lift the axe to clear away some of the trees, where some of you at least have defiled yourselves with the false gods of this world's idolatry. The first grove of trees, at which I must strike, is the *theater*. I am told by some, that in the theater there is much that might do good. There are plays, they inform me, that might be profitably heard, and I believe there are. I am told, again, that there is something so pleasant, so agreeable, so interesting in them that one might be instructed there: and that especially do the plays of Shakespeare contain such noble sentiments, that a man must feel his soul elevated and his heart expanded while witnessing their performance. Nevertheless I will have this grove down, every bit of it. It is all very well for you to eulogize it; I will not argue with you; but false gods have been worshipped in these places, and are being worshipped still; so hew down every tree of them. Oh! you would have them spared, would you? Why, which tree in the whole grove is undefiled by a harlot? Which theater in the world is not the very den and nest of abominable iniquity, obscenity, and lust? Is it possible for any man to enter and come out of one of them without defilement? If it be possible, I suppose it is only so with men who are so bad that they cannot be made worse than they are, and therefore cannot be defiled. To the Christian mind, there is something hideous in the whole matter. He may believe that there were times when the theater might have been profitable. He looks back to the days of the Greeks and Romans, and feels that then it might have been the lever of civilization. But since those old times, he finds that the devil has become the god of the theater, and the god that is diligently worshipped there is none other than Beelzebub. And therefore he says, "No, if I be a Christian, by the grace of God, I will never tread that floor again. Let others go there if they please. If they can find an interest under the shadow of its trees, let them sit there; but I remember, in the days when I went there, I worshipped Bacchus, I worshipped iniquities of every shape. For me to go there, would be to put myself into temptations way. Therefore I will down with the tree, I abhor it; I pass by on the other side, rather than come in contact even with its shadow."

Now, men may make what apologies they please, but the thing is clear to me, that no man can be a true child of God and yet attend those haunts of vice. I care not though I may be thought too severe. We had better use severity than allow souls to perish unwarned God himself has annexed to the theater the warning of your own destruction; for, staring you in the face, there is a hand with these words written—"To the pit;" and, true enough, it is the short cut to hell, and to the pit that is bottomless. But there are other groves that must come down too; There is the *tavern*,—like the grove, a very excellent thing in itself; the tavern is needed in some places for the refreshment of travelers, and the inn is a great advantage of civilization; but, nevertheless, the Christian man remembers, that in the tavern, false gods are worshipped; he recollects that the company of the taproom is not the fellowship of the saints, nor the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. The Christian may have to go into the tavern, his business may sometimes take him there; but he will be like a man going through a shower of rain; he will carry an umbrella, while he is going through it, and he will get out of it as soon as he can. So will the Christian do, he will try and guard himself against evil while he is there, but not one moment longer will he stay than imperative necessity demands. The tavern, I have said, was originally an institute

of civilization, and it is at this day a thing that cannot be given up, but, notwithstanding this, let no Christian, nor any pretender to Christianity, resort habitually to such places, nor let him sit down with the profane who generally assemble there. I believe there are Christian men who are often tempted into bad company by the benefit clubs and societies which are held in such places, if there are no benefit societies but those which are held in public-houses, trust to God, and have nothing to do with societies at all. But there *are* others; and you are under no necessity whatever, to injure and contaminate your character by connecting yourself with those who meet in such places and lead you into sin. "Well," says one, "but I can do it and yet I am not hurt." I dare say *you* can, *I* could not. If the coals did not burn me, yet they would blacken me; and, therefore, I would have nothing to do with them. There are some professors, however, who are like the old lady's coachman. She advertised for a coachman, and three waited on her. To one she said, "How near could *you* drive to danger?" "Madam," he replied, "I could drive, I dare say, within six inches, and yet be safe." "Then you will not suit me at all," said she. She asked the next, "How near can you drive me to danger?" "I would drive within a hair's breadth." "Then you will not suit me." The third was asked, "How near can you drive to danger?" "Madam," said he, "that is a thing I never tried; for I always drive as far off danger as ever I can." She said, "Then you will suit me." That is my advice to every professor of religion.

I must make the very same remark with regard to the pastimes, the puerile pastimes and enjoyments of the rich, and of those who meet for purposes, not of sin, but of what they call *recreation*. Dancing—the ball-room—is there anything sinful there? I say, No! no more than there was in the trees that surrounded the image. But nevertheless, I will cut the trees down, because of their association with the images. I must have done with every amusement of such a kind that I could not appear before my God whilst in the act. The Christian is to recollect, that "in such an hour as he thinks not the Son of Man cometh." Would he like his Master to come and find him in the society of the frivolous; engaged in the dizzy mazes of the dance? I trow not. Perhaps one of the last places he would like to be found in would be there. Dancing! while hell is filling and sinners are perishing! What! are Christian men to be the saviours of the world, and yet waste their time so? Are there no poor to be relieved, no sick to be visited? Are there no dens of this great metropolis that need to be pried into by the servants of Christ? Are there no children to be taught, are there no aged men who need leading to Jesus; is there nothing to be done in this great vineyard—this great field of the Lord, so that a Christian could afford to waste his time so? Let the worldling do it if he likes, we have no right to talk to him about it. But amusements that are right for him are not right for us. Let him do as he pleases, but we are the servants of God. We protest that all we have and all we are is given up to Christ, and can that be consistent with the waste of time that is involved in the frivolous amusements in which so many are content to indulge? I do not condemn the thing itself, any more than I condemn the grove of trees. I condemn it for its associations with many things that are to be avoided by the Christian; jesting, lascivious and foolish talking, and many unholy thoughts, that must necessarily arise. Down with the trees altogether, because there have false gods been worshipped. You are too hard, a great deal, some will reply; well, I dare say I am, but I am not harder than God's Word. If I am, whatever is not according to God's Word, reject; but you will not find me beginning to temporize just yet I assure you. While I know a thing to be true, I am not the man to stammer in speaking it. What I would not do myself I would not have others do who are Christian men, and who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I must lift up the axe against another evil—*books*. There are many books that are to be so esteemed by the Christian man, that they must be cut down like the groves of trees, not because they are bad in themselves, mark, but because there false gods are worshiped. Novel-reading is the rage of the present day. I go to a railway bookstall, and I cannot see a book that I can read. I get one, and it is all trash. I search to find something that would be really valuable but I am told, “It would not sell here.” The fact is, nothing will sell but that which is light, and frothy, and frivolous; so every traveler is compelled to consume such food as that, unless he carry something better with him. Do I, therefore, say, that the Christian man must condemn all reading of fiction and novels? No, I do not, but I do say, that the mass of popular books published under the name of Light Literature is to be eschewed and cut down, for the simple reason that the moral of it is not that of piety and goodness; the tendency of the reading is not to bring the Christian towards heaven, but rather to retard and impede him in his good course. I lift up my axe against many a work that I cannot condemn, if I look at it abstractedly in itself, but which must come down, because I recollect how much of my own precious time I wasted in such vapid reading, and how many years in which I might have had fellowship with Christ have been cast away, whilst I have been foolishly indulging a vicious taste for the romantic and the frivolous. No, there are many things which are not wrong in themselves, but which nevertheless must be given up by the true Christian, because they have had, and do have association with things positively wrong. Just as these groves must be cut down—not because there can be a sin in trees, but because the trees have been associated with the worship of idols. You remember John Knox’s memorable saying, when he turned the Romanists out, he went straight away to pull down their chapels. He gathered the mob together, and began to overhaul the whole of their places of worship. Why should John Knox meddle with them? ” I’ll pull the nests down,” said he, “then I shall be sure that the birds will never come back.” So I would today. I would not only drive away the birds—the sin, the evil; but I would pull down the nest, so that there will be no temptation to you to come back again to the sin. “Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a father unto you.” Come out from the world, ye children of Christ. Have naught to do with their enjoyments, nor with their devices. Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Go not a whoring after these iniquities, but drink thou waters out of thine own cistern, and be thou always ravished with his love who is thy Lord, thy husband, thy hope, thy joy, thine all.

III. Moreover, they not only broke the images, and cut down the groves, but they **THREW DOWN THE HIGH PLACES, AND THE ALTARS OUT OF ALL JUDAH AND BENJAMIN.** This was, perhaps, the least necessary work, but it showed the thoroughness of their desire to serve the Lord. These altars were built for the service of the true God, but they were built against his express command. God had said that he would have but one altar, namely, at Jerusalem. These people, to avoid inconvenience and trouble, thought they would build altars, wherever they lived, and there celebrate their worship. I can conceive that they worshipped Jehovah with all their hearts, and that He might graciously accept even such worship as that through Christ Jesus, overlooking their ignorance and casting their sin behind his backs. But now as their zeal was kindled, their consciences became scrupulous, so they resolved not only to avoid, the things that are positively sinful but they would have nothing to do with anything that is not positively right. So they began to cast down the altars of God, because they were not built according to God’s law. This then is a third reformation, which ought to result from the ministry, and the assembling of the people together when we have times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. There should be a casting down

of everything in connection with the true worship, that is not according to the law of God and the word of God. As it was with the worship of Israel of old, so it is now with that of the Christian church. The pure becomes alloyed with the base, that which is genuine with that which is spurious, divine revelation with human tradition, and the inspired decrees of heaven with the inventions and devices of the children of men. Some fallacies are perpetuated from generation to generation, until the deep hue of antiquity tinges them over, makes them look venerable and speciously invites a reverence and regard to which they never had any legitimate claim. We have in this country, seven or eight different forms of the Christian religion. Some of these are at complete variance and contradiction with others. Some indeed, I verily think, are contradictory in themselves. We are all, I do trust, building on a sure foundation for eternity, if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and abide by the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, notwithstanding our many grievous discrepancies, which must involve error. Evangelical Christians are to be found in every sect and denomination, bearing the name of our one common Lord; yea, there are some who as yet have never taken upon them his name by public profession, who devoutly follow him in secret. But, mark ye this, if the grace of God be once more restored to the church in all its fullness and the Spirit of God be poured out from on high, in all his sanctifying energy there will come such a shaking as has never been seen in our days. We want such an one as Martin Luther to rise from his tomb. If Martin Luther, were now to visit our so-called reformed churches, he would say with all his holy boldness “I was not half a reformer when I was alive before, now I will make thorough work of it.” How he would adjure you to cast away your superstitions, to abolish all the rites and forms and ceremonies that are not of divine appointment, and once more in the integrity of simple faith, to worship the Lord God alone, in that way alone, which the Lord God himself has ordained. Let all these, like those altars of Judaism, be cast down to the ground and utterly put away. I desire not only to be a Christian, but to be fully a Christian, walking in all the ways of my blessed Master, with a perfect heart, and I desire for all my brethren and sisters in Christ here, not only that they may have grace enough to save their souls, but grace enough to purify them from all the devices of men, from every false doctrine, from every false practice, and every evil thing. Speak you now of doctrine? Are there not two kinds of doctrines professed among Christians, the one Arminian, and the other Calvinistic? We cannot be both right; it is impossible. The Arminian says, “God loves all men alike.” “Not so,” says the Calvinist. “He has proved to many of us by his free and distinguishing grace that he has given us more than others, not for the merit of our deservings, but according to the riches of his mercy, and the counsel of his own will.” The Arminian supposes, that Christ hath bought all men with his blood, and yet that multitudes of these redeemed ones perish. The Calvinist holds, that none can perish for whom Jesus died—that his blood was never shed in vain and that of all those whom he hath redeemed, none shall ever perish. The Arminian teaches that though a man should be regenerated and become a child of God to-day, he may to-morrow be cast out of the covenant, and be as much a child of the devil as if no spiritual change had been wrought in him. “Not so,” says the Calvinist, “Salvation is of God alone, and where once he begins he never leaves off, until he has finished the good work.” How obvious it is that we cannot both be right in matters about which we so widely differ. I exhort you, therefore, my brothers and sisters, after you have broken your images and cut down your groves, go a step further, and break down the false altars. I can only say for myself, “If I be wrong, I desire to be set right,” and for you I am solemnly concerned, “If you be wrong, may God help you to a right judgment, and bring you to see the truth, embrace it, and earnestly and valiantly maintain it. I like you to be charitable to others; but do not be too

charitable to yourselves. Let others follow out their own conscientious convictions, but do you recollect, it is not your conscience that is to be your guide, but God's Word; and if your conscience is wrong, you are to bring it to God's Word that it may be reproved and "transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is for you to do *what* God tells you, *as* God tells you, *when* God tells you, and *how* God tells you.

Pardon me for a moment, if I should risk the displeasure of some I love by referring to an ordinance of the church about which we are likely to disagree. The sacred rite of baptism is administered in a great number of churches to little infants upon the sponsorship of their guardians or friends, while many of us consider that Holy Scripture teaches that believers only (without respect to their age at all) are the proper subjects of baptism, and that upon a personal profession of their faith in Christ. I see a man take up an unconscious infant in his arms, and he says he baptizes it. When I turn to my Bible, I can see nothing whatever of this sort there. It is true I find the Lord Jesus saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me," but that affords no precedent for carrying a little child to the minister, that could not come, that was too young to walk, much less to think and understand the meaning of these things. Yet more, when Jesus said "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven"—they did come to him; but I do not find that he baptized or sprinkled them at all, he gave them his blessing and they went away. I am sure he did not baptize them, for it is expressly said, "Jesus Christ baptized not, but his disciples." So, then, that passage does not favor the Paedo-baptist, it is quite clear. I am informed however, that the reason why children are baptized is, that we are told in the Bible that Abraham's children were circumcised. This puzzles me. I cannot see any likeness at all between the two things. But who were the persons circumcised? They were Israelites. Why were they circumcised? Because they were Israelites. That is the reason; and I say I would not hesitate to baptize any Christian, though he be a babe in Christ, as soon as he knows the Lord Jesus Christ, were he only eight days old in the faith, if he proves that he is an Israelite in the spirit himself, I will baptize him. I have nothing to do with his father or his mother in religion. Religion is a personal act all the way through; another man cannot believe for me, cannot repent for me; and another person cannot give for me the answer of a good conscience toward God in baptism and have it done in my name. We must act on our own individual responsibility in religion by the grace of God, or else the thing is virtually not done at all. Now I believe many godly people do sincerely worship God at this altar of infant baptism; but I am equally clear that it is my duty to do my utmost to break it down, for it is not God's altar; God's altar is believers' baptism. What said Philip to the Eunuch? "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." "Lo! here is water," said the Eunuch. Yes, but that was not all; there must be faith, as well as water, before there could be legitimate baptism; and every baptism that is administered to any man, except he asketh it himself, on profession of his faith in Christ, is an altar at which I could not worship, for I do not believe it to be the altar of God, but an altar originally built at Rome, the pattern of which has been adopted here, to the marring of the union of the church, and to the great injury of souls. Now, all I ask from those who differ from me in opinion is, simply to look at the matter honestly and calmly. If they can find infant baptism in the Bible, then let them practice it and worship there; if they cannot, let them be honest, and come and worship at the altar of Jerusalem, and there alone. An old woman was once promised a Bible, if she could find a text that sanctioned infant baptism. She could only find one, and that was, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." The minister gave her the Bible for her ingenuity, admitting, that it was an ordinance of man, and no mistake. I quote this instance of infant

baptism, as only one out of many corruptions that have crept into our churches. It is quite clear that all sects cannot be right. They may be right as to the main points essential to salvation, though in their discrepancies with one another they betray errors. I do not want you to believe that I am right. rather turn to Scripture, and see what is right. The day must come when Episcopacy, Independency, Wesleyanism, and every other system, must be read by the Word of God, and every form given up that is not approved before the Most High. I hope I shall always be able to lift up my voice against that charity growing up in our midst, which is not only a charity towards persons, but a charity towards doctrines. I here fervent charity towards every brother in Christ who differs from me. I love him for Christ's sake, and hold fellowship with him for the truth's sake: but I can have no charity for his errors, nor do I wish him to have any for mine. I tell him straight to his face, "If your sentiments contradict mine, either I am right and you are wrong, or you are right and I am wrong; and it is time we should meet together and search the Word of God, to see what is right." Talk of your Evangelical Alliances, and such like: they will never endure; they may effect many blessed purposes, but they are not the remedy that is wanted for our divisions. What is wanted is, for all of us to come to the model of the Word of God, and when we have come to that, we must come together. Let us all come "to the law and to the testimony." Let the Baptist, let the Independent, let the Churchman, lay aside his old thoughts, his old prejudices, and his old traditions, and let each man search for himself, as in the sight of Almighty God, and some of the altars must go down, for they cannot all be after the divine type, when their dissimilarity is so palpable. May the Spirit of God be poured out in this land, and there will come a three-fold reformation, such as I have described; broken images, groves cut down, and fallen altars scattered to the winds. And yet, my dear hearers, I do not ask you to attend to this last thing first. It is unimportant, compared with the first. The images are first to be burned, then sinful customs are to be given up, and after that let the church be reformed. Each of these in its proper place and due order is important, and all must be attended to. Yet once more, my hearer, before I send thee away let me put one pertinent and pressing question to thee. What hast thou got by all thy hearing of God's Word? Some of you have heard sermons beyond count; you can hardly reckon the number of gospel ministers to whom you have listened. What good have you obtained as the result of them all? Have you been led to repentance? Have you been brought to faith? Are you made "a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." If not, I solemnly remind thee that all thy church goings and chapel goings are increasing thy condemnation. Unless thou repentest, these privileges shall rise up in judgment against thee to condemn thee. Woe unto thee, London, woe unto thee, for if the words which have been preached in thy streets had been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they had repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Woe unto you, ye sons and daughters of pious parents, children trained in the Sunday-school, hearers of God's Word; for "except ye repent, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say," and may God guide you aright.

Jacob and Esau

A Sermon

(No. 241)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 16th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”—Romans 9:15.

DO NOT IMAGINE for an instant that I pretend to be able thoroughly to elucidate the great mysteries of predestination. There are some men who claim to know all about the matter. They twist it round their fingers as easily as if it were an everyday thing; but depend upon it, he who thinks he knows all about this mystery, knows but very little. It is but the shallowness of his mind that permits him to see the bottom of his knowledge; he who dives deep, finds that there is in the lowest depth to which he can attain a deeper depth still. The fact is, that the great questions about man's responsibility, free-will, and predestination, have been fought over, and over, and over again, and have been answered in ten thousand different ways; and the result has been, that we know just as much about the matter as when we first began. The combatants have thrown dust into each other's eyes, and have hindered each other from seeing; and then they have concluded, that because they put other people's eyes out, they could therefore see.

Now, it is one thing to refute another man's doctrine, but a very different matter to establish my own views. It is very easy to knock over one man's hypothesis concerning these truths, not quite so easy to make my own stand on a firm footing. I shall try to-night, if I can, to go safely, if I do not go very fast; for I shall endeavour to keep simply to the letter of God's Word. I think that if we kept more simply to the teachings of the Bible, we should be wiser than we are; for by turning from the heavenly light of revelation, and trusting to the deceitful will-o'-the-wisps of our own imagination, we thrust ourselves into quags and bogs where there is no sure footing, and we begin to sink; and instead of making progress, we find ourselves sticking fast. The truth is, neither you nor I have any right to want to know more about predestination than what God tells us. That is enough for us. If it were worth while for us to know more, God would have revealed more. What God has told us, we are to believe, but to the knowledge thus gained, we are too apt to add our own vague notions, and then we are sure to go wrong. It would be better, if in all controversies, men had simply stood hard and fast by “Thus saith the Lord,” instead of having it said, “Thus and thus I think.” I shall now endeavour, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to throw the light of God's Word upon this great doctrine of divine sovereignty, and give you what I think to be a Scriptural statement of the fact, that some men are chosen, other men are left,—the great fact that is declared in this text,—“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

It is a terrible text, and I will be honest with it if I can. One man says the word “hate” does not mean hate; it means “love less:”—“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I loved less.” It may be so: but I don't believe it is. At any rate, it says “hate” here; and until you give me another version of the Bible, I shall keep to this one. I believe that the term is correctly and properly translated; that the word “hate” is not stronger than the original; but even if it be a little stronger, it is nearer the mark than the other translation which is offered to us in those meaningless words, “love less.” I

like to take it and let it stand just as it is. The fact is, God loved Jacob, and he did not love Esau; he did choose Jacob, but he did not choose Esau; he did bless Jacob, but he never blessed Esau; his mercy followed Jacob all the way of his life, even to the last, but his mercy never followed Esau; he permitted him still to go on in his sins, and to prove that dreadful truth, "Esau have I hated." Others, in order to get rid of this ugly text, say, it does not mean Esau and Jacob; it means the nation; it means Jacob's children and Esau's children; it means the children of Israel and Edom. I should like to know where the difference lies. Is the difficulty removed by extending it? Some of the Wesleyan brethren say, that there is a national election; God has chosen one nation and not another. They turn round and tell us it is unjust in God to choose one man and not another. Now, we ask them by everything reasonable, is it not equally unjust of God to choose one nation and leave another? The argument which they imagine overthrows us overthrows them also. There never was a more foolish subterfuge than that of trying to bring out national election. What is the election of a nation but the election of so many *units*, of so many people? and it is tantamount to the same thing as the particular election of individuals. In thinking, men cannot see clearly that if—which we do not for a moment believe—that if there be any injustice in God choosing one man and not another, how much more must there be injustice in his choosing one nation and not another. No! the difficulty cannot be got rid of thus, but is greatly increased by this foolish wresting of God's Word. Besides, here is the proof that that is not correct; read the verse preceding it. It does not say anything at all about nations, it says, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger,"—referring to the children, not to the nations. Of course the threatening was afterwards fulfilled in the position of the two nations; Edom was made to serve Israel. But this text means just what it says; it does not mean nations, but it means the persons mentioned. "Jacob,"—that is the man whose name was Jacob—"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Take care my dear friends, how any of you meddle with God's Word. I have heard of folks altering passages they did not like. It will not do, you know, you cannot alter them; they are really just the same. Our only power with the Word of God is simply to let it stand as it is, and to endeavour by God's grace to accommodate ourselves to that. We must never try to make the Bible bow to us, in fact we cannot, for the truths of divine revelation are as sure and fast as the throne of God. If a man wants to enjoy a delightful prospect, and a mighty mountain lies in his path, does he commence cutting away at its base, in the vain hope that ultimately it will become a level plain before him? No, on the contrary, he diligently uses it for the accomplishment of his purpose by ascending it, well knowing this to be the only means of obtaining the end in view. So must we do; we cannot bring down the truths of God to our poor finite understandings; the mountain will never fall before us, but we can seek strength to rise higher and higher in our perception of divine things, and in this way only may we hope to obtain the blessing.

Now, I shall have two things to notice to-night. I have explained this text to mean just what it says, and I do not want it to be altered—"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." To take off the edge of this terrible doctrine that makes real some people bite their lips so, I must just notice that *this is a fact*; and, after that, I shall try to answer the question,—*Why was it that God loved Jacob and hated Esau?*

I. First, then, THIS IS FACT. Men say they do not like the doctrine of election. Verily, I do not want them to; but is it not a fact that God has elected some? Ask an Arminian brother about election, and at once his eye turns fiercely upon you, and he begins to get angry, he can't bear it; it is a

horrible thing, like a war-cry to him, and he begins to sharpen the knife of controversy at once. But say to him, "Ah, brother! was it not divine grace that made you to differ? Was it not the Lord who called you out of your natural state, and made you what you are?" "Oh, yes," he says, "I quite agree with you there." Now, put this question to him: "What do you think is the reason why one man has been converted, and not another?" "Oh," he says, "the Spirit of God has been at work in this man." Well, then, my brother, the fact is, that God *does* treat one man better than another; and is there anything wonderful in this fact? It is a fact we recognize every day. There is a man up in the gallery there, that work as hard as he likes, he cannot earn more than fifteen shillings a week; and here is another man that gets a thousand a year; what is the reason of this? One is born in the palaces of kings, while another draws his first breath in a roofless hovel. What is the reason of this? God's providence. He puts one man in one position, and another man in another. Here is a man whose head cannot hold two thoughts together, do what you will with him; here is another who can sit down and write a book, and dive into the deepest of questions; what is the reason of it? God has done it. Do you not see the fact, that God does not treat every man alike? He has made some eagles, and some worms; some he has made lions, and some creeping lizards; he has made some men kings, and some are born beggars. Some are born with gigantic minds and some verge on the idiot. Why is this? Do you murmur at God for it? No, you say it is a fact, and there is no good in murmuring. What is the use of kicking against facts? It is only kicking against the pricks with naked feet, and you hurt yourself and not them. Well, then, election is a positive fact; it is as clear as daylight, that God does, in matters of religion, give to one man more than to another. He gives to me opportunities of hearing the word, which he does not give to the Hottentot. He gives to me, parents who, from infancy, trained me in the fear of the Lord. He does not give that to many of you. He places me afterwards in situations where I am restrained from sin. Other men are cast into places where their sinful passions are developed. He gives, to one man a temper and disposition which keeps him back from some lust, and to another man he gives such impetuosity of spirit, and depravity turns that impetuosity so much aside, that the man runs headlong into sin. Again, he brings one man under the sound of a powerful ministry, while another sits and listens to a preacher whose drowsiness is only exceeded by that of his hearers. And even when they are hearing the gospel, the fact is God works in one heart when he does not in another. Though, I believe to a degree, the Spirit works in the hearts of all who hear the Word, so that they are all without excuse, yet I am sure he works in some so powerfully, that they can no longer resist him, but are constrained by his grace to cast themselves at his feet, and confess him Lord of all; while others resist the grace that comes into their hearts; and it does not act with the same irresistible force that it does in the other case, and they perish in their sins, deservedly and justly condemned. Are not these things facts? Does any man deny them? *can* any man deny them? What is the use of kicking against facts? I always like to know when there is a discussion, what is the fact. You have heard the story of King Charles the Second and the philosophers—King Charles asked one of them, "What is the reason why, if you had a pail of water, and weighed it, and then put a fish into it, that the weight would be the same?" They gave a great many elaborate reasons for this. At last one of them said, "Is it the fact?" And then they found out that the water did weigh more, just as much more as the fish put into it. So all their learned arguments fell to the ground. So, when we are talking about election, the best thing is to say, "Put aside the doctrine for a moment, let us see what is the fact?" We walk abroad; we open our eyes; we see, there is the fact. What, then, is the use of our discussing any longer? We had better believe it, since it is an undeniable truth. You may alter an opinion, but you cannot alter

a fact. You may change a mere doctrine, but you cannot possibly change a thing which actually exists. There it is—God does certainly deal with some men better than he does with others. I will not offer an apology for God; he can explain his own dealings; he needs no defence from me,

“God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain;”

but there stands the fact. Before you begin to argue upon the doctrine, just recollect, that whatever you may think about it, you cannot alter it; and however much you may object to it, it is actually true that God did love Jacob, and did not love Esau.

For now look at Jacob's life and read his history; you are compelled to say that, from the first hour that he left his father's house, even to the last, God loved him. Why, he has not gone far from his father's house before he is weary, and he lies down with a stone for his pillow, and the hedges for his curtain, and the sky for his canopy; and he goes to sleep, and God comes and talks to him in his sleep; he sees a ladder, whereof the top reaches to heaven, and a company of angels ascending and descending upon it; and he goes on his journey to Laban. Laban tries to cheat him, and as often as Laban tries to wrong him, God suffers it not, but multiplies the different cattle that Laban gives him. Afterwards, you remember, when he fled unawares from Laban, and was pursued, that God appears to Laban in a dream, and charges him not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. And more memorable still, when his sons Levi and Simeon have committed murder in Shethem, and Jacob is afraid that he will be overtaken and destroyed by the inhabitants who were rising against him, God puts a fear upon the the people, and says to them, “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm.” And when a famine comes over the land, God has sent Joseph into Egypt, to provide corn in Goshen for his brethren, that they should live and not die. And see the happy end of Jacob—“I shall see my son Joseph before I die.” Behold the tears streaming down his aged cheeks, as he clasps his own Joseph to his bosom! See how magnificently he goes into the presence of Pharaoh, and blesses him. It is said, “Jacob blessed Pharaoh.” He had God's love so much in him, that he was free to bless the mightiest monarch of his times. At last he gave up the ghost, and it was said at once, “This was a man that God loved.” There is the fact that God did love Jacob.

On the other hand, there is the fact that God did not love Esau. He permitted Esau to become the father of princes, but he has not blessed his generation. Where is the house of Esau now? Edom has perished. She built her chambers in the rock, and cut out her cities in the flinty rock; but God has abandoned the inhabitants thereof, and Edom is not to be found. They became the bond-slaves of Israel; and the kings of Edom had to furnish a yearly tribute of wool to Solomon and his successors; and now the name of Esau is erased from the book of history. Now, then, I must say, again, this ought to take off at least some of the bitterness of controversy, when we recollect that it is the fact, let men say what they will, that God did love Jacob, and he did not love Esau.

II. But now the second point of my subject is, WHY IS THIS? Why did God love Jacob? why did he hate Esau? Now, I am not going to undertake too much at once. You say to me, “Why did God love Jacob? and why did he hate Esau?” We will take one question at a time; for the reason why some people get into a muddle in theology is, because they try to give an answer to two questions. Now, I shall not do that; I will tell you one thing at a time. I will tell you why God loved Jacob; and, then, I will tell you why he hated Esau. But I cannot give you the same reason for two contradictory things. That is wherein a great many have failed. They have sat down and seen these facts, that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, that God has an elect people, and that there are others who are not elect. If, then, they try to give the same reason for election and non-election, they make

sad work of it. If they will pause and take one thing at a time, and look to God's Word, they will not go wrong.

The first question is, *why did God love Jacob?* I am not at all puzzled to answer this, because when I turn to the Word of God, I read this text;—"Not for your sakes, do I this saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways O house of Israel." I am not at a loss to tell you that it could not be for any good thing in Jacob, that God loved him, because I am told that "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth." I *can* tell you the reason why God loved Jacob; *It is sovereign grace*. There was nothing in Jacob that could make God love him; there was everything about him, that might have made God hate him, as much as he did Esau, and a great deal more. But it was because God was infinitely gracious, that he loved Jacob, and because he was sovereign in his dispensation of this grace, that he chose Jacob as the object of that love. Now, I am not going to deal with Esau, until I have answered the question on the side of Jacob. I want just to notice this, that Jacob was loved of God, simply on the footing of free grace. For, come now, let us look at Jacob's character; I have already said in the exposition, what I think of him. I do think the very smallest things of Jacob's character. As a natural man, he was always a bargain-maker.

I was struck the other day with that vision that Jacob had at Bethel: it seemed to me a most extraordinary development of Jacob's bargain-making spirit. You know he lay down, and God was pleased to open the doors of heaven to him, so that he saw God sitting at the top of the ladder, and the angels ascending and descending upon it. What do you suppose he said as soon as he awoke? Well, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Why, if Jacob had had faith, he would not have been afraid of God: on the contrary, he would have rejoiced that God had thus permitted him to hold fellowship with him. Now, hear Jacob's bargain. God had simply said to him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." He did not say anything about what Jacob was to do: God only said, *I will do it*,—"Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Now, can you believe, that after God had spoken face to face with Jacob, that he would have had the impudence to try and make a bargain with God? But he did. He begins and says, "*If*—" There now, the man has had a vision, and an absolute promise from God, and yet he begins with an "*If*." That is bargain-making with a vengeance! "*If* God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, *then*"—not without—mark, he is going to hold God to his bargain—"then shall, the Lord be my God: and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." I marvel at this! If I did not know something about my own nature, I should be utterly unable to understand it. What! a man that has talked with God, then begin to make a bargain with him! that has seen the only way of access between heaven and earth, the ladder Christ Jesus, and has had a covenant made between himself and God, a covenant that is all on God's part—all a promise—and yet wants after that to hold God to the bargain: as if he were afraid God would break his promise! Oh! this was vile indeed!

Then notice his whole life. While he lived with Laban, what miserable work it was. He had got into the hands of a man of the world; and whenever a covetous Christian gets into such company, a terrible scene ensues! There are the two together, greedy and grasping. If an angel could look down upon them, how would he weep to see the man of God fallen from his high place, and become as bad as the other. Then, the device that Jacob used, when he endeavoured to get his wages was most extraordinary. Why did he not leave it to God, instead of adopting such systems as that? The whole way through we are ashamed of Jacob; we cannot help it. And then, there is that grand period in his life, the turning point, when we are told, that “Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed.” We will look at that—I have carefully studied the subject, and I do not think so much of him as I did. I thought Jacob wrestled with God, but I find it is the contrary; he did not wrestle with God; God wrestled with him. I had always set Jacob up, in my mind, as the very model of a man wrestling in prayer; I do not think so now. He divided his family, and put a person in front to appease Esau. He did not go in front himself, with the holy trust that a patriarch should have felt; guarded with all the omnipotence of heaven, he might boldly have gone to meet his brother, but no! he did not feel certain that the latter would bow at his feet, although the promise said, “The elder shall serve the younger.” He did not rest on that promise; it was not big enough for him. Then he went at night to the brook Jabbok. I do not know what for, unless he went to pray; but I am afraid it was not so. The text says, “And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” There is a great deal of difference between a man wrestling with me, and my wrestling with him. When I strive with anyone, I want to gain something from him, and when a man wrestles with me, he wants to get something out of me. Therefore, I take it, when the man wrestled with Jacob, he wanted to get his cunning and deceit out of him, and prove what a poor sinful creature he was, but he could not do it. Jacob’s craft was so strong, that he could not be overcome; at last, the angel touched his thigh, and showed him his own hollowness. And Jacob turned round and said, “Thou hast taken away my strength, now I will wrestle with *thee*,” and when his thigh was out of joint, when he fully felt his own weakness, then, and not till then, is he brought to say, “I will not let *thee* go, except thou bless me.” He had had full confidence in his own strength, but God at last humbled him, and when all his boasted power was gone, then it was that Jacob became a prevailing prince. But, even after that, his life is not clear. Then you find him an unbelieving creature; and we have all been as bad. Though we are blaming Jacob, brethren, we blame ourselves. We are hard with him, but we shall be harder with ourselves. Do you not remember the memorable speech of the patriarch, when he said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me?” Ah, Jacob, why cannot you believe the promise? All other promises have been fulfilled. But no! he could not think of the promise; he was always wanting to live by sight.

Now, I say if the character of Jacob, be as I have described it, and I am sure it is—we have got it in God’s word—there was, there could have been nothing in Jacob, that made God love him; and the only reason why God loved him, must have been because of his own grace, because “he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.” And rest assured, the only reason why any of us can hope to be saved is this, the sovereign grace of God. There is no reason why I should be saved, or why you should be saved, but God’s own merciful heart, and God’s own omnipotent will. Now that is the doctrine; it is taught not only in this passage, but in multitudes of other passages of God’s Word. Dear friends, receive it, hold fast by it, and never let it go.

Now, the next question is a different one: *Why did God hate Esau?* I am not going to mix this question up with the other, they are entirely distinct, and I intend to keep them so, one answer will not do for two questions, they must be taken separately, and then can be answered satisfactorily. Why does God hate any man? I defy anyone to give any answer but this, because that man deserves it; no reply but that can ever be true. There are some who answer, divine sovereignty; but I challenge them to look that doctrine in the face. Do you believe that God created man and arbitrarily, sovereignly—it is the same thing—created that man, with no other intention, than that of damning him? Made him, and yet, for no other reason than that of destroying him for ever? Well, if you can believe it, I pity you, that is all I can say: you deserve pity, that you should think so meanly of God, whose mercy endureth for ever. You are quite right when you say the reason why God loves a man, is because God does so; there is no reason in the man. But do not give the same answer as to why God hates a man. If God deals with any man severely, it is because that man deserves all he gets. In hell there will not be a solitary soul that will say to God, O Lord, thou hast treated me worse than I deserve! But every lost spirit will be made to feel that he has got his deserts, that his destruction lies at his own door and not at the door of God; that God had nothing to do with his condemnation, except as the Judge condemns the criminal, but that he himself brought damnation upon his own head, as the result of his own evil works. Justice is that which damns a man; it is mercy, it is free grace, that saves; sovereignty holds the scale of love; it is justice holds the other scale. Who can put that into the hand of sovereignty? That were to libel God and to dishonour him;

Now, let us look at Esau's character, says one, "did he deserve that God should cast him away?" I answer, he did. What we know of Esau's character, clearly proves it. Esau lost his birthright. Do not sit down and weep about that, and blame God. Esau sold it himself; he sold it for a mess of pottage. Oh, Esau, it is in vain for thee to say, "I lost my birthright by decree." No, no. Jacob got it by decree, but you lost it because you sold it yourself—didn't you? Was it not your own bargain? Did you not take the mess of red pottage of your own voluntary will, in lieu of the birthright? Your destruction lies at your own door, because you sold your own soul at your own bargain, and you did it yourself. Did God influence Esau to do that? God forbid, God is not the author of sin. Esau voluntarily gave up his own birthright. And the doctrine is, that every man who loses heaven gives it up himself. Every man who loses everlasting life rejects it himself. God denies it not to him—he will not come that he may have life. Why is it that a man remains ungodly and does not fear God? It is because he says, "I like this drink, I like this pleasure, I like this sabbath-breaking, better than I do the things of God." No man is saved by his own free-will, but every man is damned by it that is damned. He does it of his own will; no one constrains him. You know, sinner, that when you go away from here, and put down the cries of conscience, that you do it yourself. You know that, when after a sermon you say, "I do not care about believing in Christ," you say it yourself—You are quite conscious of it, and if not conscious of it, it is notwithstanding a dreadful fact, that the reason why you are what you are, is because you *will* to be what you are. It is your own will that keeps you where you are, the blame lies at your own door, your being still in a state of sin is voluntary. You are a captive, but you are a voluntary captive. You will never be willing to get free until God makes you willing. But you are willing to be a bond slave. There is no disguising the fact, that man loves sin, loves evil, and does not love God. You know, though heaven is preached to you through the blood of Christ, and though hell is threatened to you as the result of your sins, that still you cleave to your iniquities; you will not leave them, and will not fly to Christ. And when you are cast away, at last it will be said of you, "you have lost your birthright." But you sold it yourself. You know

that the ball-room suits you better than the house of God: you know that the pot-house suits you better than the prayer-meeting; you know you trust yourself rather than trust Christ; you know you prefer the joys of the resent time to the joys of the future. It is your own choice—keep it Your damnation is your own election, not God's; you richly deserve it.

But, says one, "Esau repented." Yes, he did, but what sort of a repentance was it? Did you ever notice his repentance? Every man who repents and believes will be saved. But what sort of a repentance was his? As soon as he found that his brother had got the birthright, he sought it again with repentance, he sought it with tears, but he did not get it back. You know he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; and he thought he would buy it back by giving his father a mess of pottage. "There," he says, "I will go and hunt venison for my father. I have got over him with my savoury meat, and he will readily give me my birthright again." That is what sinners say: "I have lost heaven by my evil works: I will easily get it again by reforming. Did I not lose it by sin? I will get it back by giving up my sins." "I have been a drunkard," says one, "I will give up drinking, and I will now be a teetotaller." Another says, "I have been an awful swearer; I am very sorry for it, indeed; I will not swear any more." So all he gives to his father is a mess of pottage, the same as that for which he sold it. No, sinner, you may sell heaven for a few carnal pleasures, but you cannot buy heaven by merely giving them up. You can get heaven only on another ground, viz., the ground of free-grace. You lose your soul justly, but you cannot get it back by good works, or by the renunciation of your sins.

You think that Esau was a sincere penitent. Just let me tell you another thing. This blessed penitent, when he failed to get the blessing, what did he say? "The days of mourning for my father are at hand: then will I slay my brother Jacob." There is a penitent for you. That is not the repentance that comes from God the Holy Spirit. But there are some men like that. They say they are very sorry they should have been such sinners as that, very sorry that they should have been brought into such a sad condition as that; and then they go and do the same that they did before. Their penitence does not bring them out of their sin, but it leaves them in it, and, perhaps, plunges them still deeper into guilt. Now, look at the character of Esau. The only redeeming trait in it was that he did begin with repentance, but that repentance was even an aggravation of his sin, because it was without the effects of evangelical repentance. And I say, if Esau sold his birthright he did deserve to lose it; and, therefore, am I not right in saying, that if God hated Esau, it was because he deserved to be hated. Do you observe how Scripture always guards this conclusion? Turn to the ninth chapter of Romans, where we have selected our text, see how careful the Holy Spirit is here, in the 22nd verse. "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." But it does not say anything about *fitting* men for destruction; they fitted themselves. *They* did that: God had nothing to do with it. But when men are saved, God fits them for that. All the glory to God in salvation; all the blame to men in damnation.

If any of you want to know what I preach every day, and any stranger should say, "Give me a summary of his doctrine," say this, "He preaches salvation all of grace, and damnation all of sin. He gives God all the glory for every soul that is saved, but he won't have it that God is to blame for any man that is damned." That teaching I cannot understand. My soul revolts at the idea of a doctrine that lays the blood of man's soul at God's door. I cannot conceive how any human mind, at least any Christian mind, can hold any such blasphemy as that. I delight to preach this blessed

truth—salvation of God, from first to last—the Alpha and the Omega; but when I come to preach damnation, I say, damnation of man, not of God; and if you perish, at your own hands must your blood be required. There is another passage. At the last great day, when all the world shall come before Jesus to be judged, have you noticed, when the righteous go on the right side, Jesus says, “Come, ye blessed of my father,”—(“of my father,” mark,)—“inherit the kingdom prepared”—(mark the next word)—“*for you*, from before the foundation of the world.” What does he say to those on the left? “Depart, ye cursed.” He does not say, “ye cursed of my father, but, ye cursed. “And what else does he say?” into everlasting fire, prepared”—(*not for you*, but)—“for the devil and his angels.” Do you see how it is guarded, here is the salvation side of the question. It is all of God. “Come, ye blessed of my father.” It is a kingdom prepared for them. There you have election, free grace in all its length and breadth. But, on the other hand, you have nothing said about the father—nothing about that at all. “Depart, ye cursed.” Even the flames are said not to be prepared for sinners, but for the devil and his angels. There is no language that I can possibly conceive that could more forcibly express this idea, supposing it to be the mind of the Holy Spirit, that the glory should be to God, and that the blame should be laid at man’s door.

Now, have I not answered these two questions honestly? I have endeavoured to give a scriptural reason for the dealings of God with man. He saves man by grace, and if men perish they perish justly by their own fault. “How,” says some one, “do you reconcile these two doctrines?” My dear brethren, I never reconcile two friends, never. These two doctrines are friends with one another; for they are both in God’s Word, and I shall not attempt to reconcile them. If you show me that they are enemies, then I will reconcile them. “But,” says one, “there is a great deal of difficulty about them.” Will you tell me what truth there is that has not difficulty about it? “But,” he says, “I do not see it.” Well, I do not ask you to see *it*; I ask you to believe it. There are many things in God’s Word that are difficult, and that I cannot see, but they are there, and I believe them. I cannot see how God can be omnipotent and man be free; but it is so, and I believe it. “Well,” says one, “I cannot understand it. My answer is, I am bound to make it as plain as I can, but if you have not any understanding, I cannot give you any; there I must leave it. But then, again, it is not a matter of understanding; it is a matter of faith. These two things are true; I do not see that they at all differ. However, if they did, I should say, if they appear to contradict one another, they do not really do so, because God never contradicts himself. And I should think in this I exhibited the power of my faith in God, that I could believe him, even when his word seemed to be contradictory. That is faith. Did not Abraham believe in God even when God’s promise seemed to contradict his providence? Abraham was old, and Sarah was old, but God said Sarah should have a child. How can that be? said Abraham, for Sarah is old; and yet Abraham believed the promise, and Sarah had a son. There was a reconciliation between providence and promise; and if God can bring providence and promise together, he can bring doctrine and promise together. If I cannot do it, God can even in the world to come.

Now, let me just practically preach this for one minute. Oh, sinners, if ye perish, on your own head must be your doom. Conscience tells you this, and the Word of God confirms it. You shall not be able to lay your condemnation at any man’s door but your own. If you perish you perish by suicide. You are your own destroyers, because you reject Christ, because you despise the birthright and sell it for that miserable mess of pottage—the pleasures of the world. It is a doctrine that thrills through me. Like a two-edged sword, I would make it pierce to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. If you are damned it shall be your own fault. If you are found in hell, your blood shall

be on your own head. You shall bring the faggots to your own burning; you shall dig the iron for your own chains; and on your own head will be your doom. But if you are saved, it cannot be by your merits, it must be by grace—free, sovereign grace. The gospel is preached to you; it is this: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

May grace now be given to you to bring you to yield to this glorious command. May you now believe in him who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Free grace, who shall tell thy glories? who shall narrate thy achievements, or write thy victories? Thou hast carried the cunning Jacob into glory, and made him white as the angels of heaven, and thou shalt carry many a black sinner there also, and make him glorious as the glorified. May God prove this doctrine to be true in your own experience! If there still remains any difficulty upon your minds about any of these points, search the Word of God, and seek the illumination of his Spirit to teach you. But recollect after all, these are not the most important points in Scripture. That which concerns you most, is to know whether you have an interest in the blood of Christ? whether you really believe in the Lord Jesus. I have only touched upon these, because they cause a great many people a world of trouble, and I thought I might be the means of helping some of you to tread upon the neck of the dragon. May God grant that it may be so for Christ's sake.

Prayer Answered, Love Nourished

A Sermon

(No. 240)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 27th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication.”—Psalm 116:1.

IN the Christian pilgrimage it is well for the most part to be looking forward. Whether it be for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love, the future after all must be the grand object of the eye of faith. Looking into the future we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And looking further yet, the believer's soul can see Death's river passed, the gloomy steam forded; he can behold the hills of light on which standeth the celestial city; he seeth himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than a conqueror—crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with him, made to sit together with him on his throne, even as *he* has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon his throne. The sight of the future may well relieve the darkness of the past, the hopes of the world to come may banish all the doubtings of the present. Hush, my fears! this world is but a narrow span, and thou shalt soon have passed it. Hush, hush, my doubts! death is but a narrow stream, and thou shalt soon have forded it. Time, how short—eternity, how long! Death, how brief—immortality, how endless!

“Oh the transporting, rapturous scene
That rises to my sight!
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight.
Filled with delight my raptured soul
Would here no longer stay,
Though Jordan's waves around me roll,
Fearless I'd launch away.”

Yet nevertheless the Christian may do well sometimes to look backward; he may look back to the hole of the pit and the miry clay whence he was digged—the retrospect will help him to be humble, it will urge him to be faithful. He may look back with satisfaction to the glorious hour when first he saw the Lord, when spiritual life for the first time quickened his dead soul. Then he may look back through all the changes of his life, to his troubles and his joys, to his Pisgahs and to his Engedis, to the land of the Hermonites and the hill Mizar. He must not keep his eye always backward, for the fairest scene dies beyond, it will not benefit him to be always considering the past, for the future is more glorious far; but nevertheless at times a retrospect may be as useful as a prospect; and memory may be as good a teacher as even faith itself. This morning I bid you stand upon the hill-top of your present experience and look back upon the past, and find therein motives for love to God; and may the Holy Spirit so help me in preaching and you in hearing, that your love may be inflamed, and that you may retire from this hall, declaring in the language of the Psalmist, “I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication.”

The particular objects which you are now to look back upon are the manifold and manifest answers to prayer, which God has given you. I want you now to take up a book which you ought often to read, the book of remembrance which God has written in your heart of his great goodness and continued mercies; and I want you to turn to that golden page wherein are recorded the instances of God's grace in having listened to your voice and having answered your supplications. I shall give you seven reflections, each of which shall stir up your hearts to love our God whose memorial is that he hears and answers prayers.

I. And the first thing I would have you recollect is, **YOUR OWN PRAYERS**. If you look at them with an honest eye, you will be struck with wonder that ever God should have heard them. There may be some men who think their prayers worthy of acceptance: I dare say the Pharisee did. But all such men shall find that however worthy they may esteem their prayers, God will not answer them at all. The true Christian in looking back weeps over his prayers, and if he could retrace his steps he would desire to pray better, for he sees that all his attempts at prayer in the past have been rather blundering attempts than actual successes. Look back now Christian upon thy prayers, and remember what *cold* things they have been. Thou hast been on thy knees in the closet, and there thou oughtest to have wrestled as Jacob did, but instead of that thy hands have fallen down, and thou hast forgotten to strive with God. Thy desires have been but faint, and they have been expressed in such sorry language, that the desire itself seemed to freeze upon the lips that uttered it. And yet, strange to say, God has heard those cold prayers, and has answered them too, though they have been such that we have come out of our closets and have wept over them. At other times our hearts have been broken, because we felt as if we could not feel, and our only prayer was, "God forgive us that we cannot pray." Yet, notwithstanding, God has heard this inward groaning of spirit. The feeble prayer which we ourselves despised, and which we thought would have died at the gate of mercy, has been nursed, and nurtured, and fostered, and accepted, and it has come back to us a full grown blessing, bearing mercy in both its hands.

Then again, believer, *how infrequent and few are your prayers, and yet how numerous and how great have God's blessings been*. Ye have prayed in times of difficulty very earnestly, but when God has delivered you, where was your former fervency? In the day of trouble you besieged his throne with all your might and in the hour of your prosperity, you could not wholly cease from supplication, but oh! how faint was the prayer compared with that which was wrung out of your soul by the rough hand of your agony. Yet, notwithstanding that, though you have ceased to pray as you once did, God has not ceased to bless. When you have forgotten your closet, he has not forgotten your house, nor your heart. When you have neglected the mercy-seat, God has not left it empty, but the bright light of the Shekinah has always been visible between the wings of the cherubim. Oh! I marvel that the Lord should regard those intermittent spasms of importunity which come and go with our necessities. Oh! what a God is he that he should hear the prayers of men who come to him when they have wants, but who neglect him when they have received a mercy, who approach him when they are forced to come, but who almost forget to go to him when mercies are plentiful and sorrows are few.

Look at your prayers, again, in another aspect. *How unbelieving have they often been!* You and I have gone to the mercy-seat, and we have asked God to bless us, but we have not believed that he would do so. He has said, "whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believe that ye shall have it, and ye shall have it." Oh! how I could smite myself this morning, when I think how on my knees I have doubted my God! What would you think of a man who came before you with a petition, and said,

“Sir, you have promised to give me such-and-such a thing if I asked for it; I ask for it, but I do not believe you will give it me.” You would say “Get you gone until you believe me better. I will give nothing to a man who doubts my word.” Often might the Lord have spurned us from his mercy-seat, when we have come to him, not believing the very promises which we were pretending to plead.

How small, too, the faith of our most faithful prayers! When we believe the most, how little do we trust; how full of doubting is our heart, even when our faith has grown to its greatest extent! What Christian is there here who is not ashamed of himself for having so often doubted a God who never yet denied himself, who was never once untrue, nor once unfaithful to his word? Yet, strange to tell, God has heard our prayers; though we believed not, he abode faithful. He has said “Poor heart, thy weakness makes thee doubt me, but my love compels me to fulfill the promise, even though thou doubtest.” He has heard us in the day of our trouble; he has brought us sweet deliverance, even when we dishonored him by trembling at his mercy-seat. I say again, look back upon your prayers, and wonder that God should ever have heard them. Often, when we awake in the morning, and find our house and family all secure, and remember what a poor family prayer we uttered the night before, we must wonder the house was not burnt and all in it. And you in the church, after you have been to the prayer-meeting and prayed there, and God has actually listened to you, and multiplied the church and blessed the minister, do you not say afterwards, “I wonder that he should have heard such poor prayers as those that were uttered at the prayer-meeting?” I am sure, beloved, we shall find much reason to love God, if we only think of those pitiful abortions of prayer, those unripe figs, those stringless bows, those headless arrows, which we call prayers, and which he has borne with in his longsuffering. The fact is, that sincere prayer may often be very feeble to us, but it is always acceptable to God. It is like some of those one-pound notes, which they use in Scotland—dirty, ragged bite of paper; one would hardly look at them, one seems always glad to get rid of them for something that looks a little more like money. But still, when they are taken to the bank, they are always acknowledged and accepted as being genuine, however rotten and old they may be. So with our prayers: they are foul with unbelief, decayed with imbecility, and worm-eaten with wandering thoughts; but nevertheless, God accepts them at heaven’s own bank, and gives us rich and ready blessings, in return for our supplications.

II. Again: I hope we shall be led to love God for having heard our prayers, if we consider THE GREAT VARIETY OF MERCIES WHICH WE HAVE ASKED IN PRAYER, AND THE LONG LIST OF ANSWERS WHICH WE HAVE RECIEVED. Now, Christian, again—be thine own preacher. It is impossible for me to depict thine experience as well as thou canst read it thyself. What multitudes of prayers have you and I put up from the first moment when we learnt to pray! The first prayer was a prayer for ourselves; we asked that God would have mercy upon us, and blot out our sin. He heard that. But when he had blotted out our sins like a cloud, then we had more prayers for ourselves. We have had to pray for sanctifying grace, for constraining and restraining grace; we have been led to ask for a fresh assurance of faith, for the comfortable application of the promise, for deliverance in the hour of temptation, for help in the time of duty, and for succor in the day of trial. We have been compelled to go to God for our soup, as constant beggars asking for everything. Bear witness, children of God, you have never been able to get anything for your souls elsewhere. All the bread your soul has eaten has come down from heaven, and all the water of which it has drank has come out of that living rock,—Christ Jesus the Lord. Your soul has never grown rich in itself; it has always been a pensioner upon the daily bounty of God; and hence your prayers have had to ascend to heaven for a range of spiritual mercies all but infinite. Your wants

were innumerable, and, therefore, the supplies have been innumerable, and your prayers have been as varied as the mercies have been countless.

But it is not for your *soul* alone that you have pleaded, your *body* has had its cries. You have been poor, and you have asked for food and raiment. How frequently have they been given to you. Not by miracles it is true. The ravens do not bring you bread and meat, but bread and meat comes without the ravens which is a greater miracle still. It is true your raiment has waxed old, and therefore you have not realized the miracle of the children of Israel in the wilderness, whose clothes never grew old, nevertheless you have had a greater miracle still, for you have had new ones when you wanted them. All your necessities have been provided for as they have arisen. How often have these necessities come upon you? So great have they been at times, that you have said, "Surely the Lord will forsake me and deliver me over; I shall not have my bread given me, nor shall my water be sure." But hitherto God has fed you; you are not starved yet, and by the grace of God you won't be. You have been told many a time by unbelief that you would die in the workhouse; but you are out of it even now, though it seems as if a thousand miracles had been put together to keep you from it.

Then again; how often sickness has laid hold upon you, and like Hezekiah, you have turned your face to the wall, and cried, "Lord, spare thy servant, and let him not go down to the grave in the midst of his days:" and here you are, the living, the living to praise God. Recollect the fever and the cholera, and all those other fierce diseases which have laid you low; remember those prayers you uttered, and those vows you made. Oh! do not you love the Lord because he hath heard your voice and your supplication? How frequently too have you prayed for journeying mercies, and he has protected you in the midst of accidents. You have asked for blessings in your going out and your coming in blessings of the day and of the night, and of the sun and of the moon; and all these have been vouchsafed to you. Your prayers were innumerable; you asked for countless mercies, and they have all been given. Only look at yourself: are not you adorned and bejewelled with mercies as thickly as the sky with stars. Think how you have prayed for your family. When you first knew the Lord your husband feared him not; but how you wrestled for your husband's soul! and now the tear is in your eye while you see your husband sitting by your side in the house of God, and recollect, it is not many months ago since he would have been in the tavern. Your children too have through your prayers been brought to God. Mothers, you wrestled with God that your children might be God's children, and you have lived to see them converted. How great the mercy to see our offspring called in early youth. Oh! love the Lord, because in this respect too he has heard your voice and your supplication. How often have you presented before God your business, and he has helped you in that matter. How frequently have you laid your household sorrows before him, and he has delivered you in that case. And some of us can sing of blessings given to us in the service of God in his church. We have lived to see the empty sanctuary crowded to the full, we have seen our largest attempts successful beyond our most sanguine hopes; we have prayed for sinners, and seen them saved; we have asked for backsliders, and have seen them restored; we have cried for a Pentecost, and we have had it; and by God's grace we are crying for it again, and we shall have it once more. O minister, deacon, elder, church member, father, mother, man of business, hast thou not indeed cause to say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications?" I am afraid the very fact that God hears our prayers so constantly, leads us to forget the greatness of his mercy. Let it not be so, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his

benefits." Let this to-day be brought to mind, and let me raise a song to the God who hath heard the voice of my supplication.

III. Let us note again **THE FREQUENCY OF HIS ANSWERS TO OUR FREQUENT PRAYERS**. If a beggar comes to your house, and you give him alms, you will be greatly annoyed if within a month he shall come again; and if you then discover that he has made it a rule to wait upon you monthly for a contribution, you will say to him, "I gave you something once, but I did not mean to establish it as a rule." Suppose, however, that the beggar should be so impudent and impertinent that he should say, "But I intend sir to wait upon you every morning and every evening:" then you would say, "I intend to keep my gate locked that you shall not trouble me." And suppose he should then look you in the face and add still more, "Sir, I intend waiting upon you every hour, nor can I promise that I won't come to you sixty times in an hour; but I just vow and declare that as often as I want anything so often will I come to you: if I only have a wish I will come and tell it to you; the least thing and the greatest thing shall drive me to you; I will always be at the post of your door." You would soon be tired of such importunity as that, and wish the beggar anywhere, rather than that he should come and tease you so. Yet recollect, this is just what you have done to God, and he has never complained of you for doing it; but rather he has complained of you the other way. He has said, "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob." He has never murmured at the frequency of your prayers, but has complained that you have not come to him enough. Every morning when you have risen your cry has gone up to him; again with the family you have cried to the God of Jacob; at eventide you have gathered together and have prayed to him, and whenever ye have a trial, or a want, or a doubt, or a fear, ye have, if ye have done rightly, sped away swiftly to his throne and told him all. Speak now, saint, has he once said to you "Get you gone, thou weariest me?" Has he ever said "Mine ear is heavy that it cannot hear, my arm is shortened that I cannot save?" Has he said, "Away with thee, I want not thus to be perpetually hearing thee? What is thy harsh grating voice, that I should always give mine ear to it? Am I not hearkening to the songs of angels, to the shouts of cherubim? Away with thee, tease me not. At certain seasons thou mayest come, on the Sabbath-day thou mayest pray, but I want not to hear thee in the week?" No, no, he has sweetly embraced us every time, he has always bowed the heaven and come down to listen to our feeble cries; he has never denied a promise, never broken his word, even when we have pleaded a thousand times a day. Oh I will love the name of such a patient God as this, who bears with my prayers though they be as a cloud of hornets in the air.

IV. Go a little further and you will have another thought arising. Think of **THE GREATNESS OF THE MERCY FOR WHICH YOU HAVE OFTEN ASKED HIM**. We never know the greatness of our mercies till we get into trouble and want them. I talk to-day of pardoned sin, but I confess I do not feel its preciousness as once I did. There was a time when my sins lay heavy on me; conscience accused me, and the law condemned me, and I thought if God would but pardon me, it would be the greatest thing he ever did. The creating of a world seemed to me to be but little compared with the taking away of my desperately evil sins. Oh, how I cried, how I groaned before him; and he has pardoned me, and blessed be his name for it. But I cannot estimate the value of his pardon to-day so well as I could when I was seeking it—almost driven to despair. Oh, remember soul, when thou didst ask for pardon thou wast asking for that which worlds could not buy; thou wast asking for that which could only be procured through the lifeblood of the Son of God. Oh! what a boon was that! And yet he did not look thee in the face and say, "Thou hast asked too much." No, but he gave it freely. He upbraided not; he blotted out all thy sins, and washed thee at once in

the river of the Saviour's blood. Since that time what large things hast thou asked! Thou wast in trouble once, it seemed as if bankruptcy must overtake thee, and thou didst cry to him. If the world heard it it would have said, "What a fool art thou to ask this of thy God—he will never deliver thee!" Unbelief, like Rabshekeh, wrote a blasphemous letter, and thou didst lay it before the Lord; but even when thou wast in prayer, thy heart said, "The Lord will not deliver thee this time. The lion will surely devour thee. The furnace will most certainly burn thee up." But you did put up a poor, groaning prayer, and you dared to ask great things, namely, that God would put his hand out of heaven and save you from the waters, that the flood might not overflow you. Are you not surprised at this time that you dared to ask so much! You would not dare to ask so largely of any of your friends; you would not have gone to one and said, "I must have a thousand pounds by such and such a day, will you lend it to me?"—you knew you would not get it. Yet you asked it of your God. It came, and here you are, the living to praise his name; and if this were the right place you would stand up and testify that God did hear you, that in the day of sorrow and tribulation he delivered you. Now do you not love him for giving you such great things as these? God's mercies are so great that they cannot be magnified; they are so numerous they cannot be multiplied, so precious they cannot be over-estimated. I say, look back to-day upon these great mercies with which the Lord has favored thee in answer to thy great desires, and wilt thou not say, "I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications?"

V. Another aspect of this case, perhaps, will reach our hearts more closely still. **HOW TRIVIAL HAVE BEEN THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE OFTEN TAKEN BEFORE GOD, AND YET HOW KINDLY HAS HE CONDESCENDED TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS.** It is a singular thing, that our hearts are often more affected by little than by great things. You may feed a child all the year round, and never get its thanks, but give it a sweetmeat or an orange, and you may have its heart and its gratitude. Strange that the bounties of a whole year should seem to be lost, while the gift of a moment is greatly prized. A little thing, I say, may often touch the heart more than a great thing. Now, how often have we, if we have acted rightly, taken little things before the Lord. I believe it is the Christian's privilege to take all his sorrows to his God, be they little or be they great. I have often prayed to God about a matter at which you would laugh if I should mention it. In looking back I can only say it was a little thing, but it seemed great at the time. It was like a little thorn in the finger, it caused much pain, and might have brought forth, at last, a great wound. I learned to lay my little troubles at the feet of Jesus. Why should we not? Are not our great ones little? and is there, after all, much difference between great troubles and little ones in the sight of God? The queen will stand at one hour listening to her ministers, who talk with her about public business, but does she seem less a queen when, afterwards, her little child runs to her as its mother, because a gnat has stung it? Is there any great condescension the matter? She who was a right royal queen when she stood in the privy chamber is as right royal a queen and as well-beloved a mother of the nation, when she takes the little child upon her knee, and gives it a maternal kiss. Her ministers must not present trifling petitions, but her children may. So the worldling may say this morning, "How absurd to think of taking little troubles to God." Ah! it might be absurd to you, but to God's children it is not. Though you were God's prime minister, if you were not his child, you would have no right to take your private troubles to him; but God's meanest child has the privilege of casting his care upon his Father, and he may rest assured that his Father's heart will not disdain to consider even his mean affairs. Now let me think of the innumerable little things God has done for me. In looking back, my unbelief compels me to wonder at myself, that I should have prayed for

such little things. My gratitude compels me to say, "I love the Lord, because he has heard those little prayers, and answered my little supplications, and made me blessed, even in little things which, after all, make up the life of man."

VI. Once more, let me remind you, in the sixth place, of THE TIMELY ANSWERS WHICH: GOD HAS GIVEN YOU TO YOUR PRAYERS, and this should compel you to love him. God's answers have never come too soon nor yet too late. If the Lord had given you his blessing one day before it did come, it might have been a curse, and there have been times when if he had withheld it an hour longer it would have been quite useless, because it would have come too late. In the life of Mr. Charles Wesley, there occurs a memorable scene at Devizes. When he went there to preach, the curate of the parish assembled a great mob of people, who determined to throw him into the horse-pond, and if he would not promise that he would never come into the town again they would kill him. He escaped into the house and hid himself upstairs. They besieged the house for hours, battering at the doors, breaking every pane of glass in the windows, and at last to his consternation, they climbed the roof, and began to throw the tiles down into the street, so as to enter the house from above. He had been in prayer to God to deliver him, and he said, "I believe my God will deliver me;" but when he saw the heads of the people over the top of the room in which he was concealed, and when they were just about to leap down he very nearly gave up all hope, and he thought surely God would not deliver him, when in rushed one of the leaders of the mob, a gentleman of the town who did not wish to incur the guilt of murder, and proposed to him that he would get him away if he would only promise that he would never come back again. "No," said he, "I will never promise that. "But," said the man, "Is it your intention that you will not return immediately?" "Well" he said, "I do not say I shall come back just yet, I do not see any use in it. As you drive me away, therefore I shall shake off the dust of my feet against you, but I mean to come back again before I die." "Well," said the man, that will do, if you only promise you will not come back directly I will get you away." And so, by a great deliverance, he was saved from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. His prayer was answered at the right time. Five minutes afterwards he would have been dead. Now cannot you say that the answer has come to you punctually at the very tick of the clock of wisdom, not before nor after.

VII. Now, the seventh recollection with which I would inspire you is this—will you not love the Lord, when you recollect the special and great instances of his mercy to you? You have had seasons of special prayer and of special answer. Let me picture a man. There was one who feared not God, nor regarded man. He was engaged in business, and his affairs were not propitious, but rather everything went against him. He went against God, and kicked the more because God kicked against him. He had servants about him that feared God and worshipped him; but as for himself, he had no thought or regard for religion. His affairs became more and more perplexed and involved. One day he passed by the house of one of his workmen, where prayer was wont to be made, and listening, he heard words uttered in supplication that touched his heart. Though he was the master, he went inside and listened to his servant while he preached. God touched that man's heart, and made him feel his need of a Saviour. He went home, and he had now double cause for prayer. He went to the Lord, and told him he was a poor, wretched undone sinner, and that he wanted mercy; and then he told the Lord beside though he did not make it very prominent, that he was a poor, almost broken merchant; and that if God did not appear for him, he knew not but that he must be driven out of house and home. These two cases were laid before God. First of all, God heard his prayer for his soul. He gave him joy and peace in believing; and poor as he was at that time, he

found enough to assist in erecting a house where the gospel might be preached. The Lord who had delivered him spiritually, now came to his assistance temporally. His affairs took a different turn, floods of prosperity rolled in upon him, and he is at this very day a living witness of the power of God to answer man's prayer for spiritual and for temporal things too. And if it were needed, he could bear his willing witness of special answer in that special time of necessity. And does he not love his God? I know he does; for he delights to honor him, he delights to give of his substance to him. And there may be others of you here present whose characters have been pictured in this one which I have portrayed before you; who are saying, "Surely he means me." Oh, will you not then, at the recollection of what God did in that double mercy, say, "love him. What can I do for him? There is nothing too great for me to give; nothing too large for me to do. Only let me know my duty, and the recollection of his marvellous bounty shall lead me to give of my substance to him; to give my whole heart to him. I will be wholly his, and hope that in death he will receive me to himself." Men and women, my brethren and sisters in Christ,—will you look back a few short years, and recollect the time when you were on your knees before God, seeking him? I could fix my eye to-day upon many a man who has been a drunkard, a swearer, a breaker of God's holy day, a hater of everything good. I think I see you in that upper chamber of yours. Oh, how you cried, how you groaned! Oh, with what agony did you pour out your unutterable sighs! You rose up, and you thought God would not have mercy on you. You went to your business; but how wretched you were! You went back again to the chamber. And how the beam out of the wall could speak now, and tell you how you cried and cried, and cried again before his mercy-seat. Do you love him but a little to-day? has your love grown cold? Go home and look again upon the chair against which you kneeled. Look at the very walls, and see if they do not accuse you, saying, "I heard you pray to God for mercy, and he has heard you. How I see your cold-heartedness; I mark your lukewarmness in his cause." Go home to your chamber, fall on your knees, and with tears of gratitude say—

"O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord;
 And all that in me is
 Be stirred up, his holy name
 To magnify and bless!"

Some of us can recollect other special seasons of prayer. Members of my church, I remind you of that solemn season, when, like a hurricane of desolation, the judgment of God swept through our midst. Standing in this pulpit this very morning, I recall to myself that evening of sorrow, when I saw my people scattered like sheep, without a shepherd, trodden upon, injured, and many of them killed. Do you recollect how you cried for your minister, that he might be restored to a reason that was then tottering? Can you recollect how ye prayed that out of evil God would bring forth good, that all the curses of the wicked might be rolled back upon themselves, and God would yet fill this place with his glory? And do you remember how long ago that is, and how God has been with us ever since, and how many of those who were injured that night, are now members of our church, and are praising God that they ever entered this house? Oh! shall we not love the Lord? There is not a church in London, that has had such answers to prayer as we have; there has not been a church that has had such cause to pray. We have had special work, special trial, special deliverance, and we ought pre-eminently to be a church, loving God, and spending and being spent in his service. Remember again the varied times of your sickness, when you have been sick, sore, and nigh unto death. Let me picture, my own experience that I may remind you of yours. I remember when I came to this pulpit in agony, and preached you a sermon which seemed to cost me my life's blood at

every word I uttered. I was taken home to my bed full of grief and agony I remember those weary nights, those doleful days, that burning brow, those roaming thoughts, those spectres that haunted my dreams, that sleep without sleep, that rest that knew no rest, that torture, and that pain. Then I sought God, and cried that he would spare me to stand in this pulpit once again. Oh! I thought then, in my poor foolish way, that I would preach as I ne'er had preached before, as "a dying man to dying men." I hoped my ministry was not over; I trusted I might have another opportunity of freeing myself from the blood of hearers, if any of that blood were on my skirts. Here I stand, and I have to chide myself that I do not love him as I ought: yet nevertheless, in the recollection of his great mercy, saving my soul from death, and mine eyes from tears, I must love him, and I must praise him; and I must in reminding each of you of similar deliverances, beseech and entreat you to bless the Lord with me. O let us magnify his name together. We must do something fresh, something greater, something larger than we have done before.

Having thus delivered these thoughts, I shall want you now for about three minutes to listen to me while I teach you three lessons which ought to spring from this sevenfold retrospect. What shall I say then? God has heard my voice in my prayer. The first lesson, then, is this—He shall hear my voice in my praise. If he heard me pray, he shall hear me sing; if he listened to me when the tear was in mine eye, he shall listen to me when my eye is sparkling with delight. My piety shall not be that of the dungeon and sick bed; it shall be that also of deliverance and of health.

"I'll praise my Maker with my breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life and thought and being last,
Or immortality endures."

Another lesson. Has God heard my voice? Then I will hear his voice. If he heard me I will hear him. Tell me, Lord, what wouldst thou have thy servant do, and I will do it; what wouldst thou have me believe, and I will believe it. If there be a labor which I have never attempted before, tell me to do it, and I will say, "Here am I; Lord, send me." Is there an ordinance to which I never attended? Dost thou say, "Do this in remembrance of me;" is it thy command? However non-essential it seems to be, I will do it, because thou hast told me to do it. If thou hast heard my feeble voice, I will hear thine, even though it be but a still small voice. Oh that you would learn that lesson!

The last lesson is, Lord, hast thou heard my voice? then I will tell others that thou wilt hear their voice too. Didst thou save me? O Lord, if thou savedst me thou canst save anybody. Didst thou hear my prayer?

"Then will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found;"

and I will bid them pray too. O you that never pray, I beseech you begin from this hour. May God the Spirit lead you to your chambers, to cry to him! Remember, if you ask through Jesus, you cannot ask in vain. I can prove that in a thousand instances God has heard my supplication. There was nothing more in me than there is in you. Go and plead the promise; plead the blood, and ask for the help of God's Spirit; and there is not one in this assembly who shall not receive the blessing, if God shall lead him to pray. Young man, young woman, go home; plead with God for yourself first; you that love him, plead for others. Let every one of us practice the second verse of this Psalm, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

Predestination and Calling

A Sermon

(No. 241)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 6th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called.”—Romans 8:30

THE GREAT BOOK OF GOD’S DECREES is fast closed against the curiosity of man. Vain man would be wise; he would break the seven seals thereof, and read the mysteries of eternity. But this cannot be; the time has not yet come when the book shall be opened, and even then the seals shall not be broken by mortal hand, but it shall be said, “The lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book and break the seven seals thereof.”

Eternal Father, who shall look

Into thy secret will?

None but the Lamb shall take the book,

And open every seal.

None but he shall ever unroll that sacred record and read it to the assembled world. How then am I to know whether I am predestinated by God unto eternal life or not? It is a question in which my eternal interests are involved; am I among that unhappy number who shall be left to live in sin and reap the due reward of their iniquity; or do I belong to that goodly company, who albeit that they have sinned shall nevertheless be washed in the blood of Christ, and shall in white robes walk the golden streets of paradise? Until this question be answered my heart cannot rest, for I am intensely anxious about it. My eternal destiny infinitely more concerns me than all the affairs of time. Tell me, oh, tell me, if ye know, seers and prophets, is my name recorded in that book of life? Am I one of those who are ordained unto eternal life, or am I to be left to follow my own lusts and passions, and to destroy my own soul? Oh! man, there is an answer to thy inquiry; the book cannot be opened, but God himself hath published many a page thereof. He hath not published the page whereon the actual *names* of the redeemed are written; but that page of the sacred decree whereon their *character* is recorded is published in his Word, and shall be proclaimed to thee this day. The sacred record of God’s hand is this day published everywhere under heaven, and he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto him. O my hearer, by thy name I know thee not, and by thy name God’s Word doth not declare thee, but by thy character thou mayest read thy name; and if thou hast been a partaker of the calling which is mentioned in the text, then mayest thou conclude beyond a doubt that thou art among the predestinated—“For whom he did predestinate, them he also called.” And if thou be called, it follows as a natural inference thou art predestinated.

Now, in considering this solemn subject, let me remark that there are two kinds of callings mentioned in the Word of God. The first is the *general call*, which is in the gospel sincerely given to everyone that heareth the word. The duty of the minister is to call souls to Christ, he is to make no distinction whatever—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel *to every creature*.” The trumpet of the gospel sounds aloud to every man in our congregations—“Ho, everyone 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.” “Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man” (Prov. 8:4). This call is sincere on God’s part; but man by nature is so opposed to God, that this call is never effectual, for man disregards it, turns his back upon it, and goes his way, caring for none of these things. But mark, although this call be rejected, man is without excuse in the rejection; the universal call has in it such authority, that the man who will not obey it shall be without excuse in the day of judgment. When thou art commanded to believe and repent, when thou art exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, the sin lies on thy own head if thou dost despise the exhortation, and reject the commandment. And this solemn text drops an awful warning: “How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation.” But I repeat it, this universal call is rejected by man; it is a call, but it is not attended with divine force and energy of the Holy Spirit in such a degree as to make it an unconquerable call, consequently men perish, even though they have the universal call of the gospel ringing in their ears. The bell of God’s house rings every day, sinners hear it, but they put their fingers in their ears, and go their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise, and though they are bidden and are called to the wedding (Luke 14:16,17,18), yet they will not come, and by not coming they incur God’s wrath, and he declareth of such,—“None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper” (Luke 14:24). The call of our text is of a different kind; it is not a universal call, it is a special, particular, personal, discriminating, efficacious, unconquerable, call. This call is sent to the predestinated, and to them only; they by grace hear the call, obey it, and receive it. These are they who can now say, “Draw us, and we will run after thee.”

In preaching of this call this morning, I shall divide my sermon into three brief parts.—First, I shall give *illustrations of the call*; second, we shall come to *examine whether we have been called*; and then third, *what delightful consequences flow therefrom*. Illustration, examination, consolation.

I. First, then, for ILLUSTRATION. In illustrating the effectual call of grace, which is given to the predestinated ones, I must first use the picture of Lazarus. See you that stone rolled at the mouth of the sepulchre? Much need is there for the stone that it should be well secured, for within the sepulchre there is a putrid corpse. The sister of that corrupt body stands at the side of the tomb, and she says, “Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.” This is the voice of reason and of nature. Martha is correct; but by Martha’s side there stands a man who, despite all his lowliness, is very God of very God. “Roll ye away the stone,” saith he, and it is done; and now, listen to him; he cries, “Lazarus, come forth!” that cry is directed to a mass of putridity, to a body that has been dead four days, and in which the worms have already held carnival; but, strange to say, from that tomb there comes a living man; that mass of corruption has been quickened into life, and out he comes, wrapped about with graveclothes, and having a napkin about his head. “Loose him and let him go,” saith the Redeemer; and then he walks in all the liberty of life. The effectual call of grace is precisely similar; the sinner is dead in sin; he is not only in sin but *dead* in sin, without any power whatever to give to himself the life of grace. Nay, he is not only dead, but he is corrupt; his lusts, like the worms, have crept into him, a foul stench riseth up into the nostrils of justice, God abhorreth him, and justice crieth, “Bury the dead out of my sight, cast it into the fire, let it be consumed.” Sovereign Mercy comes, and there lies this unconscious, lifeless mass of sin; Sovereign Grace cries, either by the minister, or else directly without any agency, by the Spirit of God, “come forth!” and that man lives. Does he contribute anything to his new life? Not he; his life is given solely by God. He was dead, absolutely dead, rotten in his sin; the life is given when

the call comes, and, in obedience to the call, the sinner comes forth from the grave of his lust, begins to live a new life, even the life eternal, which Christ gives to his sheep.

“Well,” cries one, “but what are the words which Christ uses when he calls a sinner from death?” Why the Lord may use any words. It was not long ago there came unto this hall, a man who was without God and without Christ, and the simple reading of the hymn—

“Jesus lover of my soul,”

was the means of his quickening. He said within himself, “Does Jesus love me? then I must love him,” and he was quickened in that selfsame hour. The words which Jesus uses are various in different cases. I trust that even while I am speaking this morning, Christ may speak with me, and some word that may fall from my lips, unpremeditated and almost without design, shall be sent of God as a message of life unto some dead and corrupt heart here, and some man who has lived in sin hitherto, shall now live to righteousness, and live to Christ. That is the first illustration I will give you of what is meant by effectual calling. It finds the sinner dead, it gives him life, and he obeys the call of life and lives.

But let us consider a second phase of it. You will remember while the sinner is dead in sin, he is alive enough so far as any opposition to God may be concerned. He is powerless to obey, but he is mighty enough to resist the call of divine grace. I may illustrate it in the case of Saul of Tarsus: this proud Pharisee abhors the Lord Jesus Christ; he has seized upon every follower of Jesus who comes within his grasp; he has haled men and women to prison; with the avidity of a miser who hunts after gold, he has hunted after the precious life of Christ’s disciple, and having exhausted his prey in Jerusalem, he seeks letters and goes off to Damascus upon the same bloody errand. Speak to him on the road, send out the apostle Peter to him, let Peter say, “Saul, why dost thou oppose Christ? The time shall come when thou shalt yet be his disciple.” Paul would turn round and laugh him to scorn—“Get thee gone thou fisherman, get thee gone—I a disciple of that imposter Jesus of Nazareth! Look here, this is my confession of faith; here will I hale thy brothers and thy sisters to prison, and beat them in the synagogue and compel them to blaspheme and even hunt them to death, for my breath is threatening, and my heart is as fire against Christ.” Such a scene did not occur, but had there been any remonstrance given by men you may easily conceive that such would have been Saul’s answer. But Christ determined that he would call the man. Oh, what an enterprise! Stop HIM? Why he is going fast onward in his mad career. But lo, a light shines round about him and he falls to the ground, and he hears a voice crying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” Saul’s eyes are filled with tears, and then again with scales of darkness, and he cries, “Who art thou?” and a voice calls, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” It is not many minutes before he begins to feel his sin in having persecuted Jesus, nor many hours ere he receives the assurance of his pardon, and not many days ere he who persecuted Christ stands up to preach with vehemence and eloquence unparalleled, the very cause which he once trod beneath his feet. See what effectual calling can do. If God should choose this morning to call the hardest-hearted wretch within hearing of the gospel, he must obey. Let God call—a man may resist, but he cannot resist effectually. Down thou shalt come, sinner, if God cries *down*; there is no standing when he would have thee fall. And mark, every man that is saved, is always saved by an overcoming call which he cannot withstand; he may resist it for a time, but he cannot resist so as to overcome it, he *must* give way, he *must* yield when God speaks. If he says, “Let there be light,” the impenetrable darkness gives way to light; if he says, “Let there be grace,” unutterable sin gives way, and the hardest-hearted sinner melts before the fire of effectual calling.

I have thus illustrated the call in two ways, by the state of the sinner in his sin, and by the omnipotence which overwhelms the resistance which he offers. And now another case. The effectual call may be illustrated *in its sovereignty* by the case of Zaccheus. Christ is entering into Jericho to preach. There is a publican living in it, who is a hard, griping, grasping, miserly extortioner. Jesus Christ is coming in to call some one, for it is written he must abide in some man's house. Would you believe it, that the man whom Christ intends to call is the worst man in Jericho—the extortioner? He is a little short fellow, and he cannot see Christ, though he has a great curiosity to look at him; so he runs before the crowd and climbs up a sycamore tree, and thinking himself quite safe amid the thick foliage, he waits with eager expectation to see this wonderful man who had turned the world upside down. Little did he think that he was to turn him also. The Saviour walks along preaching and talking with the people until he comes under the sycamore tree, then lifting up his eyes, he cries—“Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide in thy house.” The shot took effect, the bird fell, down came Zaccheus, invited the Saviour to his house, and proved that he was really called not by the voice merely but by grace itself, for he said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give unto the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore unto him fourfold;” and Jesus said, “This day is salvation come unto thy house.” Now why call *Zaccheus*? There were many better men in the city than he. Why call him? Simply because the call of God comes to unworthy sinners. There is nothing in man that can deserve this call; nothing in the best of men that can invite it; but God quickeneth whom he will, and when he sends that call, though it come to the vilest of the vile, down they come speedily and swiftly; they come down from the tree of their sin, and fall prostrate in penitence at the feet of Jesus Christ.

But now to illustrate this call in its effects, we remind you that Abraham is another remarkable instance of effectual calling. “Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee,” and “by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” Ah! poor Abraham, as the world would have had it, what a trial his call cost him! He was happy enough in the bosom of his father's household, but idolatry crept into it, and when God called Abraham, he called him alone and blessed him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and said to him, “Go forth, Abraham!” and he went forth, not knowing whither he went. Now, when effectual calling comes into a house and singles out a man, that man will be compelled to go forth without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach. He must come out from his very dearest friends, from all his old acquaintances, from those friends with whom he used to drink, and swear, and take pleasure; he must go straight away from them all, to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. What a trial to Abraham's faith, when he had to leave all that was so dear to him, and go he knew not whither! And yet God had a goodly land for him, and intended greatly to bless him. Man! if thou art called, if thou art called truly, there will be a going out, and a going out alone. Perhaps some of God's professed people will leave you; you will have to go without a solitary friend,—maybe you will even be deserted by Sarah herself, and you may be a stranger in a strange land, a solitary wanderer, as all your fathers were. Ah! but if it be an effectual call, and if salvation shall be the result thereof, what matters it though thou dost go to heaven alone? Better to be a solitary pilgrim to bliss, than one of the thousands who throng the road to hell.

I will have one more illustration. When effectual calling comes to a man, at first he may not know that it is effectual calling. You remember the case of Samuel; the Lord called Samuel, and he arose and went to Eli, and he said, “Here am I, for thou calledst me.” Eli said, “I called not, lie

down again. And he went and lay down." The second time the Lord called him, and said, "Samuel, Samuel," and he arose again, and went to Eli, and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me," and then it was that Eli, not Samuel, first of all perceived that the Lord had called the child. And when Samuel knew it was the Lord, he said, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." When the work of grace begins in the heart, the man is not always clear that it is God's work; he is impressed under the minister, and perhaps he is rather more occupied with the impression than with the agent of the impression; he says, "I know not how it is, but I have been called; Eli, the minister, has called me." And perhaps he goes to Eli to ask what he wants with him. "Surely," said he, "the minister knew me, and spoke something personally to me, because he knew my case." And he goes to Eli, and it is not till afterwards, perhaps, that he finds that Eli had nothing to do with the impression, but that the Lord had called him. I know this—I believe God was at work with my heart for years before I knew anything about him. I knew there was a work; I knew I prayed, and cried, and groaned for mercy, but I did not know that was the Lord's work; I half thought it was my own. I did not know till afterwards, when I was led to know Christ as all my salvation, and all my desire, that *the Lord* had called the child, for this could not have been the result of nature, it must have been the effect of grace. I think I may say to those who are the beginners in the divine life, so long as your call is real, rest assured it is divine. If it is a call that will suit the remarks which I am about to give you in the second part of the discourse, even though you may have thought that God's hand is not in it, rest assured that it is, for nature could never produce effectual calling. If the call be effectual, and you are brought out and brought in—brought out of sin and brought to Christ, brought out of death into life, and out of slavery into liberty, then, though thou canst not see God's hand in it, yet it is there.

II. I have thus illustrated effectual calling. And now as a matter of EXAMINATION let each man judge himself by certain characteristics of heavenly calling which I am about to mention. If in your Bible you turn to 2 Timothy 1:9, you will read these words—"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling." Now here is the first touchstone by which we may try our calling—many are called but few are chosen, because there are many kinds of call, but the true call, and that only, answers to the description of the text. It is "an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." This calling forbids all trust in our own doings and conducts us to Christ alone for salvation, but it afterwards purges us from dead works to serve the living and true God. If you are living in sin, you are not called; if you can still continue as you were before your pretended conversion, then it is no conversion at all; that man who is called in his drunkenness, will forsake his drunkenness; men may be called in the midst of sin, but they will not continue in it any longer. Saul was anointed to be king when he was seeking his father's asses; and many a man has been called when he has been seeking his own lust, but he will leave the asses, and leave the lust, when once he is called. Now, by this shall ye know whether ye be called of God or not. If ye continue in sin, if ye walk according to the course of this world, according to the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, then are ye still dead in your trespasses and your sins; but as he that hath called you is holy, so must ye be holy. Can ye say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I desire to keep all thy commandments, and to walk blamelessly in thy sight. I know that my obedience cannot save me, but I long to obey. There is nothing that pains me so much as sin; I desire to be quit and rid of it; Lord help me to be holy"? Is that the panting of thy heart? Is that the

tenor of thy life towards God, and towards his law? Then, beloved, I have reason to hope that thou hast been called of God, for it is a holy calling wherewith God doth call his people.

Another text. In Philippians 3:13 and 14 you find these words. “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the *high* calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Is then your calling a high calling, has it lifted up your heart, and set it upon heavenly things? Has it lifted up your hopes, to hope no longer for things that are on earth, but for things that are above? Has it lifted up your tastes, so that they are no longer grovelling, but you choose the things that are of God? Has it lifted up the constant tenor of your life, so that you spend your life with God in prayer, in praise, and in thanksgiving, and can no longer be satisfied with the low and mean pursuits which you followed in the days of your ignorance? Recollect, if you are truly called it is a high calling, a calling from on high, and a calling that lifts up your heart, and raises it to the high things of God, eternity, heaven, and holiness. In Hebrews 3:1, you find this sentence. “Holy brethren partakers of the *heavenly* calling.” Here is another test. Heavenly calling means a call *from* heaven. Have you been called, not of man but of God? Can you now detect in your calling, the hand of God, and the voice of God? If man alone call thee, thou art uncalled. Is thy calling of God? and is it a call *to* heaven as well as from heaven? Can you heartily say that you can never rest satisfied till you

—“behold his face

And never, never sin,

But from the rivers of his grace,

Drink endless pleasures in.”

Man, unless thou art a stranger here, and heaven is thy home, thou hast not been called with a heavenly calling, for those who have been so called, declare that they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and they themselves are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.

There is another test. Let me remind you, that there is a passage in scripture which may tend very much to your edification, and help you in your examination. Those who are called, are men who before the calling, groaned in sin. What says Christ?—“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Now, if I cannot say the first things because of diffidence, though they be true, yet can I say this, that I feel myself to be a sinner, that I loathe my sinnership, that I detest my iniquity, that I feel I deserve the wrath of God on account of my transgressions? If so, then I have a hope that I may be among the called host whom God has predestinated. He has called not the righteous but sinners to repentance. Self-righteous man, I can tell thee in the tick of a clock, whether thou hast any evidence of election. I tell thee—No; Christ never called the righteous; and if he has not called thee, and if he never does call thee, thou art not elect, and thou and thy self-righteousness must be subject to the wrath of God, and cast away eternally. Only the sinner, the awakened sinner, can be at all assured that he has been called; and even he, as he gets older in grace, must look for those higher marks of the high heavenly and holy calling in Christ Jesus.

As a further test,—keeping close to scripture this morning, for when we are dealing with our own state before God there is nothing like giving the very words of scripture,—we are told in the first epistle of Peter, the second chapter, and the ninth verse, that God hath called us out of darkness into marvelous light. Is that your call? Were you once darkness in regard to Christ; and has marvelous light manifested to you a marvelous Redeemer, marvelously strong to save? Say soul, canst thou honestly declare that thy past life was darkness and that thy present state is light in the Lord? “For

ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of the light." That man is not called who cannot look back upon darkness, ignorance, and sin, and who cannot now say, that he knows more than he did know, and enjoys at times the light of knowledge, and the comfortable light of God's countenance.

Yet again. Another test of calling is to be found in Galatians, the fifth chapter, and the fifteenth verse. "Brethren, ye have been called into liberty." Let me ask myself again this question, Have the fetters of my sin been broken off, and am I God's free man? Have the manacles of justice been snapped, and am I delivered—set free by him who is the great ransomer of spirits? The slave is not called. It is the free man that has been brought out of Egypt, who proves that he has been called of God and is precious to the heart of the Most High.

And yet once more, another precious means of test in the first of Corinthians, the first chapter, and the ninth verse. "He is faithful by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Do I have fellowship with Christ? do I converse with him, commune with him? Do I suffer *with* him, suffer *for* him? Do I sympathize with him in his objects and aims? Do I love what he loves; do I hate what he hates? Can I bear his reproach; can I carry his cross; do I tread in his steps; do I serve his cause, and is it my grandest hope that I shall see his kingdom come, that I shall sit upon his throne, and reign with him? If so, then am I called with the effectual calling, which is the work of God's grace, and is the sure sign of my predestination.

Let me say now, before I turn from this point, that it is possible for a man to know whether God has called him or not, and he may know it too beyond a doubt. He may know it as surely as if he read it with his own eyes; nay, he may know it more surely than that, for if I read a thing with my eyes, even my eyes may deceive me, the testimony of sense may be false, but *the testimony of the Spirit must be true*. We have the witness of the Spirit within, bearing witness with our spirits that we are born of God. There is such a thing on earth as an infallible assurance of our election. Let a man once get that, and it will anoint his head with fresh oil, it will clothe him with the white garment of praise, and put the song of the angel into his mouth. Happy, happy man! who is fully assured of his interest in the covenant of grace, in the blood of atonement, and in the glories of heaven! Such men there are here this very day. Let them "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice."

What would some of you give if you could arrive at this assurance? Mark, if you anxiously desire to know, you may know. If your heart pants to read its title clear it shall do so ere long. No man ever desired Christ in his heart with a living and longing desire, who did not find him sooner or later. If thou hast a desire, God has given it thee. If thou pantest, and criest, and groanest after Christ, even this is his gift; bless him for it. Thank him for little grace, and ask him for great grace. He has given thee hope, ask for faith; and when he gives thee faith, ask for assurance; and when thou gettest assurance, ask for full assurance; and when thou hast obtained full assurance, ask for enjoyment; and when thou hast enjoyment, ask for glory itself; and he shall surely give it thee in his own appointed season.

III. I now come to finish up with CONSOLATION. Is there anything here that can console me? Oh, yes, rivers of consolation flow from my calling. For, first, if I am called then I am predestinated, there is no doubt about it. The great scheme of salvation is like those chains which we sometimes see at horse-ferries. There is a chain on this side of the river fixed into a staple, and the same chain is fixed into a staple at the other side, but the greater part of the chain is for the most part under water, and you cannot see it: you only see it as the boat moves on, and as the chain is drawn out of the water by the force that propels the boat. If today I am enabled to say I am called, then my boat

is like the ferry-boat in the middle of the stream. I can see that part of the chain, which is named “calling,” but blessed be God, that is joined to the side that is called “election,” and I may be also quite clear that it is joined on to the other side, the glorious end of “glorification.” If I be called I must have been elected, and I need not doubt that. God never tantalized a man by calling him by grace effectually, unless he had written that man’s name in the Lamb’s book of life. Oh, what a glorious doctrine is that of election, when a man can see himself to be elect. One of the reasons why many men kick against it is this, they are afraid it hurts them. I never knew a man yet, who had a reason to believe that he himself was chosen of God, who hated the doctrine of election. Men hate election just as thieves hate Chubb’s patent locks; because they cannot get at the treasure themselves, they therefore hate the guard which protects it. Now election shuts up the precious treasury of God’s covenant blessings for his children—for penitents, for seeking sinners. These men will not repent, will not believe; they will not go God’s way, and then they grumble and growl, and fret, and fume, because God has locked the treasure up against them. Let a man once believe that all the treasure within is his, and then the stouter the bolt, and the surer the lock, the better for him. Oh, how sweet it is to believe our names were on Jehovah’s heart, and graven on Jesus’ hands before the universe had a being! May not this electrify a man of joy, and make him dance for very mirth?

Chosen of God ere time began.

Come on, slanderers! rail on as pleases you. Come on thou world in arms! Cataracts of trouble descend if you will, and you, ye floods of affliction, roll if so it be ordained, for God has written my name in the book of life. Firm as this rock I stand, though nature reels and all things pass away. What consolation then to be called: for if I am called, then I am predestinated. Come let us at the sovereignty which has called us, and let us remember the words of the apostle, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that 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 nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

A second consolation is drawn from the grand truth, that if a man be called he will certainly be saved at last. To prove that, however, I will refer you to the express words of scripture: Romans 11:29—“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He never repents of what he gives, nor of what he calls. And indeed this is proved by the very chapter out of which we have taken our text. “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified,” everyone of them. Now, believer, thou mayest be very poor, and very sick, and very much unknown and despised, but sit thee down and review thy calling this morning, and the consequences that flow from it. As sure as thou art God’s called child today, thy poverty shall soon be at an end, and thou shalt be rich to all the intents of bliss. Wait awhile; that weary head shall soon be girt with a crown. Stay awhile; that horny hand of labor shall soon grasp the palm branch. Wipe away that tear; God shall soon wipe away thy tears for ever. Take away that sigh—why sigh when the everlasting song is almost on thy lip? The portals of heaven stand wide open for thee. A few winged hours must fly; a few more billows must roll o’er

thee, and thou wilt be safely landed on the golden shore. Do not say, "I shall be lost; I shall be cast away." Impossible.

Whom once he loves he never leaves,
But loves them to the end.

If he hath called thee, nothing can divide thee from his love. The wolf of famine cannot gnaw the bond; the fire of persecution cannot burn the link, the hammer of hell cannot break the chain; old time cannot devour it with rust, nor eternity dissolve it, with all its ages. Oh! believe that thou art secure; that voice which called thee, shall call thee yet again from earth to heaven, from death's dark gloom to immortality's unuttered splendours; Rest assured, the heart that called thee, beats with infinite love towards thee, a love undying, that many waters cannot quench, and that floods cannot drown. Sit thee down; rest in peace; lift up thine eye of hope, and sing thy song with fond anticipation. Thou shall soon be with the glorified, where thy portion is; thou art only waiting here to be made meet, for the inheritance, and that done, the wings of angels shall waft thee far away, to the mount of peace, and joy, and blessedness, where

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

thou shall rest for ever and ever. Examine yourselves then whether you have been called.—And may the love of Jesus be with you. Amen.

Christ Precious to Believers

A Sermon

(No. 242)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 13th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.”—1 Peter 2:7.

THIS TEXT CALLS to my recollection the opening of my ministry. It is about eight years since as a lad of sixteen, I stood up for the first time in my life to preach the gospel in a cottage to a handful of poor people, who had come together for worship. I felt my own inability to preach, but I ventured to take this text, “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.” I do not think I could have said anything upon any other text, but Christ was precious to my soul and I was in the flush of my youthful love, and I could not be silent when a precious Jesus was the subject. I had but just escaped from the bondage of Egypt, I had not forgotten the broken fetter; still did I recollect those flames which seemed to burn about my path, and that devouring gulf which opened its mouth as if ready to devour me. With all these things fresh in my youthful heart, I could speak of *his* preciousness who had been my Saviour, and had plucked me as a brand from the burning, and set me upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, and established my goings. And now, at this time what shall I say? “What hath God wrought?” How hath the little one become a thousand, and the small one a great people? And what shall I say concerning this text, but that if the Lord Jesus was precious then, he is as precious now? And if I could declare then, that Jesus was the object of my soul’s desire, that for him I hoped to live, and for him I would be prepared to die, can I not say, God being my witness, that he is more precious to me this day than ever he was? In the recollection of his unparalleled mercy towards the chief of sinners, I must anew devote myself to him, and afresh surrender my heart to him who is Lord and King.

This remark is uttered by way of introduction, it may seem egotistical, but that I cannot help. I must give glory to God in the midst of the great congregation, and pay my vows to the Lord now in the midst of all his saints, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.

My text states a positive fact, namely, that *Christ is precious to believers*. This shall be the first part of our discourse; then in the second we will try to answer the question, *why is Jesus Christ so precious to his believing people?* And conclude by declaring the test whereby you may try yourselves whether you are believers or not; for if you be believers in Christ, then Christ is precious to you, and if you think little of him, then rest assured you have not a true and saving faith in him.

I. First, this is a positive fact, that UNTO BELIEVERS JESUS CHRIST IS PRECIOUS. In himself he is of inestimable preciousness, for he is the very God of very God. He is moreover, perfect man without sin. The precious gopher wood of his humanity is overlaid with the pure gold of his divinity. He is a mine of jewels, and a mountain of gems. He is altogether lovely, but, alas! this blind world seeth not his beauty. The painted harlotries of that which, Madam Bubble, the world *can* see, and all men wonder after her. This life, its joy, its lust, its gains, its honours,—these have beauty in the eye of the unregenerate man, but in Christ he sees nothing which he can admire. He hears his name as a common word, and looks upon his cross as a thing in which he has no

interest, neglects his gospel, despises his Word, and, perhaps, vents fierce spite upon his people. But not so the believer. The man who has been brought to know that Christ is the only foundation upon which the soul can build its eternal home, he who has been taught that Jesus Christ is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, the author and the finisher of faith, thinks not lightly of Christ. He calls him all his salvation and all his desire; the only glorious and lovely one.

Now, this is a fact which has been proved in all ages of the world. Look at the beginning of Christ's appearance upon earth. Nay, we might go farther back and mark how Christ was precious in prospect to those who lived before his incarnation; but, I say, since he has come into the world, what abundant proofs have we that he is precious to his people! There were men found who were not unwilling to part with houses, and lands, and wife, and children, and country, and reputation, and honour, and wealth, nay, with life itself, for Christ's sake. Such was the charm that Christ had for ancient Christians, that if they must renounce their patrimony and their earthly wealth for his sake, they did it cheerfully and without a murmur. Nay, they could say, that what things were gain they counted but loss for Christ's sake, and did esteem them but as dross and dung if they could win Christ and be found in him.

We talk lightly of these things, but these were no mean sacrifices. For a man to leave the partner of his bosom, to be despised by her who ought to honour him, to be spit upon by his own children, to be driven out by his countrymen, and have his name mentioned as a hissing, and a reproach, and a bye-word; this is no easy matter to bear; and yet the Christians in the first ages took up this cross, and not only carried it patiently, but carried it joyfully; rejoicing in tribulations, if those tribulations fell upon them for Christ's sake and the gospel. Nay, more than this, Satan has been permitted to put forth his hand and touch Christ's people, not only in their goods and in their families, but in their bone and in their flesh. And mark how Christ's disciples have reckoned nothing to be a loss, so that they might win Christ. Stretched upon the rack, their strained nerves have only made them sing the louder, as though they were harp strings, only put in tune when they were drawn out to their extreme length. They have been tortured with hot irons and with the pincers; their backs have been ploughed with scourges, but when have you found any of the true followers of Christ flinch in the hour of pain? They have borne all this, and challenged their persecutors to do more, and invent fresh arts and devices, fresh cruelties, and try them. Christ was so precious, that all the pain of the body could not make them deny him, and when at last they have been taken forth to a shameful death—let the axe and the block, let the cross of crucifixion, let the spear, let the fire and the stake, let the wild horse and the desert testify that the believer has always been a man, who would suffer all this, and vastly more, but who would never renounce his confidence in Christ. Look at Polycarp before the lions, when he is brought into the midst of the assembly, and it is demanded of him that he will deny his God. Thousands of savage eyes look down upon him, and there he stands, a feeble man, alone in the arena, but he tells them that "he has known his Lord these many years and he never did him a displeasure, and he will not deny him at the last." "To the lions!" they cry, "To the lions!" and the lions rush upon him, and he is speedily devoured; but all this he would have borne at the mouths of a thousand lions, if he had a thousand lives, rather than he would have thought anything amiss against the Majesty of Jesus of Nazareth. The whole history of the ancient church of Christ, proves that Jesus has been an object of his peoples' highest veneration; that they set nothing in rivalry with him, but cheerfully and readily, without a murmur, or a thought, gave up all for Jesus Christ, and rejoiced to do so.

And this is just as true to-day as it was then. If to-morrow the stake could be set in Smithfield, Christian people are prepared to be fuel for the flame. If once more the block fixed on Tower hill, and the axe were brought forth from its hiding place, the heads of Christ's people would be cheerfully given, if they might but crown the head of Jesus and vindicate his cause. Those who declare that the ancient valour of the church is departed, know not what they say. The professing church may have lost its masculine vigour; the professors of this day may be but effeminate dwarfs, the offspring of glorious fathers; but the true church, the elect out of the professing church, the remnant whom God hath chosen, are as much in love with Jesus as his saints of yore, and are as ready to suffer and to die. We challenge hell and its incarnate representative, old Rome herself; let her build her dungeons, let her revive her inquisitions, let her once more get power in the state to cut, and mangle, and burn; we are still able to possess our souls in patience. We sometimes feel it were a good thing if persecuting days should come again, to try the church once more, and drive away the chaff, and make her like a goodly heap of wheat, all pure and clean. The rotten branches of the forest may tremble at the hurricane, for they shall be swept away, but those that have sap within them tremble not. Our roots are intertwined with the Rock of Ages, and the sap of Christ flows within us and we are branches of the living vine, and nothing shall sever us from him. We know that not persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, shall divide us from the love of Christ, for in all these things we shall be as the church has been, more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Does any one think that I exaggerate? Mark, then, if what I have said be not true, then Christ has no church at all; for the church that is not prepared to suffer, and bleed and die for Christ, is not Christ's church. For what does he say? "He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."—Matthew, 10:37-38. Albeit that Christ may not put us fully to the test, yet, if we be true, we must be ready for the ordeal; and if we be sincere, though we may tremble at the thought of it, we shall not tremble in the endurance of it. Many a man who says in his heart, "I have not a martyr's faith," has really that noble virtue; and let him but once come to the push, and the world shall see the grace that has been hidden, rising a giant from his slumbers. The faith which endures the relaxing of the world's sunshine, would endure the cutting frost of the world's persecution. We need not fear; if we be true to-day, we shall be true always.

This is not mere fiction, many are the proofs that Christ is still precious. Shall I tell you of the silent sufferers for Christ, who at this day suffer a martyrdom of which we hear not, but which is true and real? How many a young girl there is who follows Christ in the midst of an ungodly family; her father upbraids her, laughs at her, makes a scoff of her holiness, and pierces her through the heart with his sarcasm! Her brothers and her sisters call her "Puritan," "Methodist," and the like, and she is annoyed day by day with what the apostle calls, "Trial of cruel mockings." But she bears all this, and though the tear is sometimes forced by it from her eye, yet though she should weep blood she would "resist unto blood, striving against sin." These sufferers are unrecorded, they are not put into a Book of Martyrs. We have no Fox to write their martyrology, they have not the flesh-contenting knowledge that they shall be publicly honoured; but they suffer alone and unheard of, still praying for those who laugh at them: bowing themselves before God on their knees in agony, not on account of the persecution, but in agony of soul for the persecutors themselves, that they may be saved. How many there are of such young men in workshops, employed in large establishments, who bend their knee at night by the bed-side, in a large room where there are many scoffers. Some of us have known this in our youthful days, and have had to endure it; but Christ is

precious to the silent sufferings of his people; these unhonoured martyrdoms prove that his church has not ceased to love him, not to esteem him precious.

How many there are, too—how many thousands of unseen and unknown labourers for Christ, whose names cannot be here declared. They toil from morning till night all through the week, and the Sabbath day should be a day of rest to them; but they work more on the Sabbath day than on any other day. They are visiting the beds of the sick; their feet are weary, and nature says rest, but they go into the lowest dens and haunts of the city to speak to the ignorant, and endeavour to spread the name and honour of Jesus where it has not been known. There are many such who are working hard for Christ, though the church scarce knows of it. And how many, too, there are who prove that they love Christ by the continual liberality of their offerings. Many are the poor people I have discovered, who have denied themselves of this and that, because they would serve Christ's cause. And many there are, too—every now and then we find them out—in the middle ranks of society, who give a hundred times as much to the cause of Christ as many of the rich and wealthy; and if you knew to what little trials they are put, to what shifts they are driven in order to serve Christ, you would say, "The man that can do this proves clearly that Christ is precious to him." And mark this, the reason why the church is not more laborious, not more generous in its gifts to the offertory of the Saviour, is just this, because the church of the day is not the church of Christ in its mass and bulk. There is a church of Christ within it, but the visible church, as it stands before you, is not to be considered the church of Christ; we must pass it through the fire, and bring the third part through the flame; for this is the day when the dross is mingled with gold. How hath the much fine gold become dim; how hath the glory departed. Zion is under a cloud. But mark, though you see it not, there is a church, a hidden church; an unmoving centre amidst the growing of profession, there is a life within this outward fungus of a growing Christianity; there is a life that is within, and to that hidden host, that chosen company, Christ is precious—they are proving it every day by their patient sufferings, by their laborious efforts, by their constant offerings to the church of Christ. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."

I will tell you one thing that proves—proves to a demonstration, that Christ is still precious to his people, and it is this:—send one of Christ's people to hear the most noted preacher of the age, whoever that may be; he preaches a very learned sermon, very fine and magnificent, but there is not a word about Christ in that sermon. Suppose that to be the case, and the Christian man will go out and say, "I did not care a farthing for that man's discourse." Why? "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. I heard nothing about Christ." Send that man on the Sabbath morning to hear some hedge and ditch preacher, some one who cuts the king's English about never so badly, but who preaches Jesus Christ—you will see the tears rolling down that man's face, and when he comes out he will say, "I do not like that man's bad grammar; I do not like the many mistakes he has made, but oh! it has done my heart good, for he spoke about Christ." That, after all, is the main thing for the Christian; he wants to hear about his Lord, and if he hears him magnified he will overlook a hundred faults. In fact, you will find that Christians are all agreed, that the best sermon is that which is fullest of Christ. They never like to hear a sermon unless there is something of Christ in it. A Welsh minister who was preaching last Sabbath at the chapel of my dear brother, Jonathan George, was saying, that Christ was the sum and substance of the gospel, and he broke out into this story:—A young man had been preaching in the presence of a venerable divine, and after he had done he went to the old minister, and said, "What do you think of my sermon?" "A very poor sermon indeed," said he. "A poor sermon?" said the young man, "it

took me a long time to study it.” “Ay, no doubt of it.” “Why, did you not think my explanation of the text a very good one?” “Oh, yes,” said the old preacher, “very good indeed.” “Well, then, why do you say it is a poor sermon? Didn’t you think the metaphors were appropriate and the arguments conclusive?” “Yes, they were very good as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon.” “Will you tell me why you think it a poor sermon?” “Because,” said he, “there was no Christ in it.” “Well,” said the young man, “Christ was not in the text; we are not to be preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text.” So the old man said, “Don’t you know young man that from every town, and every village, and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?” “Yes,” said the young man. “Ah!” said the old divine “and so from every text in Scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And my dear brother, your business in when you get to a text, to say, ‘Now what is the road to Christ?’ and then preach a sermon, running along the road towards the great metropolis—Christ. And,” said he, “I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it, and if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one; I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savour of Christ in it.” Now since you say amen to that, and declare that what you want to hear is Jesus Christ, the text is proved—“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.”

But if you want to try this again and prove it, go and see some of our sick and dying friends; go and talk to them about the Reform Bill, and they will look you in the face and say, “Oh, I am going from this time-state: it is a very small matter to me whether the Reform Bill will be carried or not.” You will not find them much interested in that matter. Well, then, sit down and talk to them about the weather, and how the crops are getting on—“Well, it is a good prospect for wheat this year.” They will say, “Ah, my harvest is ripening in glory.” Introduce the most interesting topic you can, and a believer, who is lying on the verge of eternity, will find nothing precious in it; but sit down by the bedside of this man, and he may be very near gone, almost unconscious, and begin to talk about Jesus—mention that precious soul-reviving, soul-strengthening name Jesus, and you will see his eye glisten, and the blanched cheek will be flushed once more—“Ah,” he will say, “Precious Jesus, that is the name which calms my fears, and bids my sorrows cease.” You will see that you have given the man a strong tonic, and that his whole frame is braced up for the moment. Even when he dies, the thought of Jesus Christ and the prospect of seeing him shall make him living in the midst of death, strong in the midst of weakness, and fearless in the midst of trembling. And this proves, by the experience of God’s people, that with those who believe in him, Christ is and ever must be a precious Christ.

II. The second thing is, WHY IS CHRIST PRECIOUS TO THE BELIEVER? I observe—and I shall run over those particulars very briefly, though they would be worthy of a long, long sermon—Jesus Christ is precious to the believer, because he is intrinsically precious. But here let me take you through an exercise in grammar; here is an adjective, let us go through it. He is precious *positively*; he is more precious than anything *comparatively*; he is most precious of all things, and most precious even if all things were rolled into one and put into competition with him; he is thus precious *superlatively*. Now, there are few things you can thus deal with. You say, a man is a good man, he is good positively, and you say he is a great deal better than many other people; he is good comparatively: but you can never truly say to any man that he is good superlatively, because there he would still be found short of perfection. But Christ is good positively, comparatively, and superlatively.

Is he good *positively*? Election is a good thing; to be chosen of God, and precious; but we are elect in Christ Jesus. Adoption is a good thing; to be adopted into the family of God is a good thing—ah, but we are adopted in Christ Jesus and made joint-heirs with him. Pardon is a good thing—who will not say so?—ay, but we are pardoned through the precious blood of Jesus. Justification—is not that a noble thing, to be robed about with a perfect righteousness?—ay, but we are justified in Jesus. To be preserved—is not that a precious thing?—ay; but we are preserved in Christ Jesus, and kept by his power even to the end. Perfection—who shall say that this is not precious? Well, but we are perfect in Christ Jesus. Resurrection, is not that glorious? We are risen with him. To ascend up on high, is not that precious? But he hath raised us up and made us sit together with him in heavenly places in Jesus Christ—so that Christ must be good positively, for he is all the best things in one. And if all these be good, surely *he* must be good in whom, and by whom, and to whom, and through are all these precious things.

But Christ is good *comparatively*. Bring anything here and compare with him. One of the brightest jewels we can have is liberty. If I be not free, let me die. Put the halter to my neck but put not the fetter to my wrist—a free man I must be while I live. Will not the patriot say that he would give his blood to buy liberty, and think it a cheap price? Ay, but put liberty side by side with Christ, and I would wear the fetter for Christ and rejoice in the chain. The apostle Paul himself could say, “I would that ye were altogether such I am,”—and he might add, “except these bonds,” but though he excepted bonds for others, he did not except them for himself, for he rejoiced in the chain and counted it as a mark of honor. Besides liberty, what a precious thing is life! “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life.” But let a Christian—a true Christian, once have the choice between life and Christ,—“No,” says he, “I can die, but I cannot deny; I can burn, but I cannot turn. I confess Christ and perish in the flame; but I cannot deny Christ, even though you exalt me to a throne.” There would be no choice between the two. And then whatever earthly good there may be in comparison with Christ, the believer’s testimony goes to prove that Christ is precious comparatively, for there is nothing that can match with him.

And then to go higher still—Christ is good superlatively. The superlative of all things is heaven, and if it could be possible to put Christ in competition with heaven, the Christian would not stop a moment in his choice; he would sooner be on earth with Christ than be in heaven without him. Nay, I do not know whether he would not go almost as far as Rutherford, who said, “Lord, I would sooner be in hell with thee than in heaven without thee; for if I were in heaven without thee it would be a hell to me, and if I were in hell with thee it would be a heaven to me.” We may put it so, and every Christian will subscribe to it. Now, come ye messengers of the world and take on your shoulders all its treasures. Cæsar, pour out thy gold in one glittering pile; Cæsar, lay down thine honours here in one gaudy heap; here, Tiberius, bring all the joys of Capri’s lust and vice; Solomon, bring here all the treasures of wisdom; Alexander, bring all thy triumphs; Napoleon, bring thy wide-spread empire and thy fame, put them all here, all that earth calls good; and now come, thou bleeding Lamb of God, thou marred and matchless Saviour, come here and tread these beneath thy feet, for what are all these compared with thee? I pour contempt on them all. Now am I dead to all the world, and all the world is dead to me. The whole realm of nature is small in comparison with thee, as a drop in the bucket when compared with a boundless ocean. Jesus Christ, then, is precious superlatively.

2. What more can we say? Still to answer this question again: Why is Christ precious to the believer more than to any other man? Why it is the believer’s *want* that makes Christ precious to

him. That is one answer. We have been having a small shower of rain lately, and I dare say there are very few of you who felt grateful for it; since it gave you a little wetting coming here. But suppose that shower of rain could have fallen on the desert of Arabia, what a precious thing it would have been. Yea, every rain drop would have been worth a pearl; and as for the shower, though it had rained gold dust, the rich deposit would not have been comparable to the flood when it descended from on high. But what is the reason that water is so precious there? Simply because it is so rare. Suppose I am in England; there is abundance of water and I cannot sell it; water is so common, and therefore so cheap. But put a man in the desert and let the water-skin be dried up, let him come to the well wherein he expected to find water, and it has failed him; can you not conceive that that small drop of water might be worth a king's ransom? Nay, that a man might hoard it up, and conceal it from all his comrades, because on that small drop of water depended his life? The way to prize water is to value it with a tongue like a firebrand, and with a mouth like an oven. Then can I estimate its value when I know its want. So with Christ. The worldling does not care for Christ, because he has never hungered and thirsted after him; but the Christian is athirst for Christ; he is in a dry and thirsty land, where not water is, and his heart and his flesh pant after God, yea for the living God; and as the thirsty soul dying, cries out water, water, water, so the Christian cries out Christ, Christ, Christ! This is the one thing needful for me, and if I have it not, this thirst must destroy me.

Mark, too, that the believer may be found in many aspects, and you will always find that his needs will endear Christ to him. Here is a man about to be tried for his life. Before he had committed the wrong, he used to say, "Lawyers, attornies, pleaders, away with them, what is the good of them?" Now he has got into prison he thinks very differently. He says, "I wish I could get a good special pleader to plead my cause;" and he runs over the roll to see the best man to plead for him. At last he says, "Here is a man, if he could plead my cause I might hope to escape, but I have no money with which to engage him;" and he says to his wife—"Wife, we must sell our house;" or, "We must get money somehow, for I am on trial for my life, and I must have an advocate." And what will not a woman do to get an advocate for her husband? Why, she will pledge the last rag she has to get one. Now, does not the believer feel himself to be in just such a position? He is a poor sinner on trial for his life, and he wants an advocate; and every time he looks on Christ pleading his cause before the Father's throne, he says, "O what a precious Christ he is to a poor sin-destroyed sinner, for he pleads his cause before the throne."

But suppose another case; that of a man drawn for a soldier. In such times men always look out for substitutes. I remember when the ballot was coming for the militia, how every man joined a substitute club in order that if he were drawn he might not go himself. Now suppose a man had been drawn, how valuable would a substitute have been—for no man in his senses likes to be food for powder—he would rather a man without brains go and do such work as that, but as for him he estimates himself at too high a price. But suppose he is not only drawn for a soldier, but condemned to die. See yon poor wretch coming up the gallows stairs; some one whispers to him, "What would you give for a substitute now? What would you give for some one to come and bear this punishment?" See his eye rolls madness at the thought. "A substitute," says he, "I could not buy one for the whole world. Who would be a substitute for me, to swing into eternity amidst the yellings of a crowd?" But suppose—and we are only supposing what has actually occurred—suppose this man saw not only the gallows and the drop, but hell fire before him, and it were said to him, "You must burn in that for ever unless you find a substitute," would not that be a precious one? Now, mark, that is just our position. The Christian feels that hell is before him, if it were not that he has

a glorious substitute. Jesus came forward, and said, "I will bear that punishment; pour hell on me, my Father let me drink damnation dry;" and he did it; he endured all those pains, or an equivalent for them; he suffered in the rebel's stead; and now, through him the substitute, we are absolved and free. Oh, must not he be a precious Christ?

But think of Christ again, and then think of the believer's wants. I will try and run over a number of them. The believer is a silly sheep. What a precious thing is a shepherd, and how precious are green pastures and still waters. The believer is like a desolate woman. What a precious thing is a husband who shall provide for her, and shall console and cherish her. The believer is a pilgrim, and the hot sun beats on him. What a precious thing is the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The believer is a bond-slave by nature. What a precious thing is the trump of jubilee, and the ransom-price that sets him free. The believer, by nature, is a sinking, drowning man. How precious to him is that plank of free-grace, the cross of Christ, on which he puts his poor trembling hand and secures glory. But what more shall I say? Time would fail me to tell of all the wants of the believer, and of the all-abounding and ever-flowing streams of love that flow from Christ, the fountain that fills the believer to the brim. O say, ye children of God, is he not while ye are in these lowlands of want and suffering, inconceivably, unutterably, superlatively precious to you?

3. But once more. Look at the believer not only in his wants, but in his highest earthly state. The believer is a man that was once blind and now sees. And what a precious thing is light to a man that sees. If I, as a believer, have an eye, how much I need the sun to shine. If I have no light my eye becomes a torture, and I might as well have been blind. And when Christ gives sight to the blind he makes his people a seeing people. It is then that they find what a precious thing is the sight, and how pleasant a thing it is for a man to behold the sun. The believer is a man that is quickened. A dead corpse wants no clothing, for it feels no cold. Let a man once be quickened and he finds himself naked, and wants clothing. From the very fact that the Christian is a quickened man, he values the robe of righteousness that is put about him. Christ touches his people's ears and opens them; but it were better for man to be deaf than to hear for ever doleful groans and hissings. But such must he have been, ever hearing it if it were not for Christ playing sweet music to him every day, and pouring streams of melody into his ears through his promises. Yes, I say, the very new-born powers of the Christian would be very channels for misery if it were not for Christ. Even in his highest estate the Christian must feel that Christ is necessary unto him, and then he must conclude that Christ is precious to him.

But believer, how precious is Christ to thee in the hour of conviction of sin, when he says, "Thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee." How precious to thee in the hour of sickness, when he comes to thee and says, "I will make all thy bed in thy sickness." How precious to thee in the day of trial, when he says, "All things work together for thy good." How precious when friends are buried, for he says, "I am the resurrection and the life." How precious in thy grey old age, "even in old age I am with thee, and to hoary hairs will I carry you." How precious in the lone chamber of death, for "I will fear no evil, thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff comfort me." But, last of all, how precious will Christ be when we see him as he is. All we know of Christ here is as nothing compared with what we shall know hereafter. Believer, when thou seest Christ's face now, thou only seest it through a veil—Christ is so glorious, that like Moses he is compelled to put a veil upon his face, for his poor people while they are here are so feeble that they could not behold him face to face. And if he be lovely here, when he is marred and spit upon, how lovely must he be when he is adored and worshipped. If he is precious on his cross, how much more precious when

he sits on his throne. If I can weep before him, and love him, and live to him, when I see him as the despised man of Nazareth; Oh, how shall my spirit be knit to him, how shall my heart be absorbed with love to him, when I see his face and behold his crown of glory, when I mark the harpings of the never-ceasing harpers who harp his praise. Wait awhile, Christian. If he is precious to the believer now, when faith is turned to sight he will be more precious still. Go out of this hall, and cry, "O Lord Jesus, I must love thee, I must serve thee better, I must live for thee; I must be ready to die for thee—for

'Thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust.'"

This brings me to conclude—and here I want your solemn and earnest attention while each one for himself shall answer this question—my hearer, is Christ precious to you? My young brother, you of the same age as myself, is Jesus precious to you in your youth? Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? only by taking heed thereto according to Christ's word, and by walking in his footsteps. Ye men and women of middle age, is Christ precious to you? Remember that this world is but a dream, and if you have not something more satisfactory than that, you will be disappointed, even though you succeed beyond your highest wishes. And ye grey headed men, who are going tottering to your graves, whose life is like a candle-snuff, almost expiring, like a lamp whose oil is spent. Is Christ precious to you, ye with the bald head, and with the hoary lock, is Jesus precious to your soul? Remember, on your answer to this question depends your condition. *You* believe, if he is precious to you, but if he is not precious, then you are not believers, and you are condemned already because you believe not on the Son of God. Now, which is it? Oh, methinks some of you feel as if you could spring from your seats, and say, "Yes, he is precious to me, I cannot deny it." Once there was a good minister who was catechising his class, and he said to the young people, "The question which I am about to ask is such that I want none of you to answer but those who can answer from your heart." The congregation was gathered together, and he put this question to them concerning Christ—"Suppose Christ was here, and should say, 'Lovest thou me?' what would be your reply?" He looked around, and glanced upon all the young men and the young women, and said, "Jesus speaks to you the first time, and says, 'Lovest thou me?' He speaks a second time, and he says, 'Lovest thou me?'" There was a solemn pause and no one answered; and the congregation looked at the class, and at last the minister said once more, "Jesus speaks by me a third time, and says, 'Lovest thou me?'" Up rose a young woman, who could keep her seat no longer, and, bursting into tears, said, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Now, how many are there here who could say that? Could not you now, if this were the time—although you might be bashful in the midst of so many—could you not, if Christ asked you the question, boldly say, though in the midst of enemies—"Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Well, if you can give such an answer as that, go home and pray that others may be brought to love him, for you yourselves are saved; but if you are compelled to be silent to such a question as that, O may God lead you to seek Christ, may you too be driven to the cross, may you there see his dear bleeding wounds, may you behold his open side, and falling at his feet, may you say, "I trust thee, I rely upon thee, I depend upon thee," and he will say, "I have saved thee;" and then will you spring to your feet, and say, "Lord I love thee, because thou hast first loved me." May such be the end of this sermon, and to God be all the glory.

Weak Hands and Feeble Knees

A Sermon

(No. 243)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 20th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees.”—Isaiah 35:8.

IT IS THE DUTY of all men to be careful of the sons of sorrow. There be some who from their very birth are marked by melancholy as her own. The silent shades of sorrow are their congenial haunts; the glades of the forest of grief are the only places where their leaf can flourish. Others there are who through some crushing misfortune are brought so low that they never hold up their heads again, but go from that time forth mourning to their graves. Some there be, again, who disappointed in their early youth, either in some fond object of their affections, or else in some project of their young ambition, never can dare to face the world, but shrink from contact with their fellows, even as the sensitive plant curls up its tendrils at the touch. In all flocks there must be lambs, and weak and wounded sheep; and among the flock of men, it seems that there must necessarily be some who should more than others prove the truth of Job's declaration, “man is born to trouble even as the sparks fly upwards.” It is the duty then of those of us who are more free than others from despondency of spirit, to be very tender to these weak ones. Far be it from the man of courageous disposition, of stern resolve, and of unbending purpose, to be hard towards those who are timid and despairing. If we have a lion-like spirit, let us not imitate the king of beasts in his cruelty to those timid fallow deer that fly before him, but let us place out strength at their service for their help and protection. Let us with downy fingers bind up the wounded heart; with oil and wine let us nourish their fainting spirits. In this battle of life, let the unwounded warriors bear their injured comrades to the rear, bathe their wounds, and cover them from the storm of war. Be gentle with those that are desponding. Alas, it is not every man that has learned this lesson. There are some who deal with others with rough-handed thoughtlessness. “Ah,” they say, “if such a one be so foolish as to be sensitive let him be.” O speak not thus; to be sensitive, timid, and desponding, is ill enough in itself, without out being hard and untender towards those who are so afflicted. Go ye forth, and do to others as ye would that they should do to you; and as ye would that others should in your hours of despondency deal with you tenderly and comfortably, so deal ye tenderly and comfortably with them.

But my text, especially commands the minister to deal tenderly with those of Christ's people who are in such a condition, and these are not a few, for although religion changes the moral temperament of men, it does not change the physical. A man who is weak in health before conversion will probably be as weak afterwards, and many a spirit that has a tendency to despondency, has exhibited that tendency after conversion. We do not profess that the religion of Christ will so thoroughly change a man as to take away from him all his natural tendencies; it will give the despairing something that will alleviate that despondency, but as long as that is caused by a low state of body, or a diseased mind, we do not profess that the religion of Christ will totally remove it. No, rather, we do see every day that amongst the best of God's servants, there are those who are

always doubting, always looking to the dark side of every providence, who look at the threatening more than at the promise, are ready to write bitter things against themselves, and often put the bitter for sweet, and the sweet for bitter, erring against their own spirits and robbing themselves of comforts which they might enjoy. To those then, I shall have to speak this morning in the words of our text, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees."

There is a figure used in the text, and I shall keep to it. First, I shall attempt to show *the importance of hands and knees in going to heaven*. In the second place, I shall observe *the ill effect of having weak hands and feeble knees*; then note *the causes of those weak hands and feeble knees*; for in so doing I hope I shall be able to apply a cure.

I. And, now, first, we find in our text hands and knees mentioned. We may be quite sure that **THEY ARE VERY IMPORTANT IN GETTING TO HEAVEN**. The hands and knees, we must remember, are those parts of the body in which the effects of fear are the most easily seen. Of course the root of despondency and fear must lie in the heart; it is that which is first moved with terror. But afterwards these extremities, these limbs of action, these modes of expressing the will of the heart begin to feel the weakness also. The hands hang down in terror, and the knees begin to tremble. We are always accustomed to describe a man when he is in a great fright, when some overwhelming danger appals him, as hanging down his hands or wringing them in despair, and as feeling his knees knocking together in the moment of his terror. Just so the prophet means, that wherever the Christian displays most his timidity and his dismay there we must be careful to apply the remedy of comfort. Now, it is the fact that when the Christian's heart begins to tremble, his hands of action grow weak, and his knees of prayer begin to tremble also; he becomes unable to do and unable to pray. He is weak in active service, and he becomes weak also in wrestling with his God. Hands and knees are the exhibitors of inward power. Now, there are some men whose fears are so great that they have become visible, and can no longer be concealed. There was a time when these sons of mourning were able to mask their sorrow with an outward cheerfulness, but now they cannot. The fear of the heart has glided into their hands and descended into their knees; and we see them hiding from us, as the hind, when smitten by the arrow, retires from the herd to bleed alone. To such as these, ye sons of consolation, are ye sent with words of pity and deeds of love.

But, note, the hands and knees are of the first importance because they represent active duty and supplication. The way to heaven is, through faith in Christ; but after we have believed in Christ the legitimate tendency of faith is active service. Although the Christian shall go to heaven through the blood of Christ, yet as a pilgrim he must walk there; and although he overcomes through the blood of the Lamb, yet as a warrior he must fight if he would reign. Active service is expected of every Christian. Christ does not put his children on a bed, and then carry them to heaven along a lazy road; but he gives them life and bids that life develop itself; he gives them strength, and commands them to use the strength in working out their own salvation. While he works in them, they are passive; but he then bids them be active and work out what he has beforehand wrought in. He is no Christian who does not seek to serve his God. The very motto of the Christian should be "I serve." Christ's people are Christ's servants, and as the angels in heaven delight to fly at God's behests, so do the children of God delight to run in the way of his commands. Hence, then, if the knees be weak and the hands be weak, it is little that we can do. We cannot run with the weak knee; we cannot labour with the weak hand. How can ye, the servants of Christ, how can ye lift the heavy burdens which ye have to carry, if your hands be weak and your knees totter? How can ye pull down the walls of your enemies if your hands tremble? How can ye smite your foemen with the

sword of faith if your arm be weak? Look well, then, to this, for herein ye suffer exceeding loss; if in active service ye lose power and strength.

Again, the knees may signify power. When a man becomes timid and desponding, his closet very soon becomes the chamber of woe. Our closets are either Bethels of Bochims,—the house of God or else the house of weeping. Let a man become timid, distrustful, doubting, fearing, trembling—what little power has he when he comes before the mercy seat! He would believe in God, but he cannot appropriate the promise. He would lay hold of the angel, but all his sinews shrink, and he cannot wrestle. He would plead the promise, but his hand refuses to clutch it with an iron grasp. And he goes away crying, “Oh that I could pray! oh that I could believe in God! oh that I could succeed with God in prayer, and become as a prevailing prince. Alas! I am as weak as water, and I can do nothing.” Herein lies the importance of having a strong hand that we may serve God, and of having a strong knee that we may wrestle with him in prayer, and get the blessing from him.

Note, again, that we may readily see what the prophet means by hands and knees, if we observe that a Christian, although his hopes are in heaven, stands upon the earth. It is with the hand of faith that the Christian lays hold upon that which is not seen, and endeavours to climb upwards to the skies; it is with his foot that he spurns the earth and all that it calls good or great. Let the Christian’s foot be weak, and he cannot then despise the things that are seen: but he will be fixing his affection on things on earth and not on things above. Let his hand of faith, on the other hand, grow weak, and he cannot lay hold of the things that are in heaven. He will find it difficult to fix his hold above the stars, and feel that he is surely anchored; and very hard to climb the ladder Jacob saw. The foot represents the manner in which we deal with earth, we tread upon it boldly and courageously, despising its threats, contemning its riches, contemning its honours. The weak knee cannot do this; we are then apt to bend, and cringe, and fawn before a wicked world to be slaves, where we ought to be freemen, and vile where we ought to be noble. Here again we see the importance of the hands and the knees.

But you will remember also that there are certain parts of the spiritual pilgrimage where hands and knees are absolutely required. John Bunyan represents Christian as coming to the foot of the hill Difficulty, and he says, “I looked then after Christian, to see him go up the hill, where I perceived he fell from running to going, and from going to clambering upon his hands and knees, because of the steepness of the place.” Many such a place you and I have had to pass, brother Christians. Once we could run along the walls of salvation with triumphant faith; at other times we could walk even through the valley of the shadow of death with quiet confidence: but we have come to a place of trial and of extraordinary difficulty, where all speed failed us, and strength did not suffice. Then always on our knees in agony of prayer, and always on our hands in simplicity of faith, we climbed our weary way, often fearing lest we should fall backward to our destruction, but crying out, “Lord, let my knee find a resting place, let my hand hold on some projecting crag of promise, that there I may get a fast hold, lest I totter and fall. I can but ascend slowly. My heart followeth hard after thee, my spirit crieth after thee; Lord, help me! help me to climb this way, for back I cannot go.” Every Christian who knows much about divine experience will understand what this means. He will often be brought into such a position that he can make but little progress; and he must think it quite enough if he can hold his ground against the desperate difficulties of his path. Hands and knees, then, in many ways, are essential for a Christian’s comfort, his help, and his advance in the road to heaven.

II. Now, I shall have in the second place to show THE ILL EFFECT OF WEAK HANDS AND KNEES.

And, first, we have already hinted that one ill fruit of a Christian having weak hands and knees is this, that he will not himself be able to make much progress in the divine life. Christian men have never attained to what they are to be. They have only started on their pilgrimage, and after they have gone their furthest, there is a yet-beyond towards which they must press with earnest heart, though with weary footsteps. How is it that some of you have made but little progress on the road to heaven? In looking back on your lives, come of you must acknowledge that you do not know much more about Christ now than you did six years ago. You do not enjoy greater nearness of access to him now than you did then. You are not more diligent in his service, or more fearless in his defence, than you were at a period which has long since elapsed. Perhaps you are compelled to feel that you have made no advance, or even have gone backward. Why is this? Is it not because your hands have become weak, your knees have become feeble? You have neglected prayer: you have forsaken your closets, you have not poured out your hearts before God with that frequency which once distinguished you, and you have not the faith you once possessed. You have not believed the promise as you ought to have done. You have not taken God at his naked word, and trusted to him as he deserved. And do you expect ever to make any progress in the road to heaven if you doubt your God? Do you imagine that you shall ever go far along in the heavenly pilgrimage if you neglect prayer? As well could you expect a plant to grow without air and water as to expect your heart to grow without prayer and faith. A poor blanched thing may be produced in a dark cellar; and so may you maintain a poor, blanched miserable existence, if you live absent from your God, and apart from that strength which faith can give you, but you can never attain the healthy verdure of grace. Oh, man, if thou wouldst grow in grace, if thou wouldst comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, look well to thy knees that they be strong, look well to thy hands that they hang not down.

The Christians of this age seem to me to be content with themselves, though there is infinite reason for the reverse. When I sit down and read the biographies of saints who have gone to heaven, I am astonished at myself, and I can only weep to think how far I am behind these men, and then how much further I must be behind my divine Master. Surely the examples of eminent saints should spur us onward. If Henry Martin could unreservedly devote his life and energies to Christ's service, why may not we? If Martin Luther with holy boldness could face the danger, why should not we? If Calvin with clear and eagle eye could read the doctrines of the gospel amid the mists of error, why should not we? If men of more modern times have been able to endure opprobrium and disgrace for Christ's sake, or if they in private have been able to reach to the seventh heaven of communion with God, and have lived on earth as if they were in paradise, why should not we? There is no reason why the least saint in God's family should not outrun the greatest. Why look upon the saints of olden time as if they were so far above us that we can never equal them? Oh, dream not so! What Abraham was you may be. What the mightiest saint of that former life was, that ought you to be. You should never rest satisfied until you labour to surpass them all; yea, not even them, for you have not yet attained to the perfection which is in Christ. I know this age is one which is always satisfied if it gets barely enough to carry it to heaven. Where is that holy ambition which ought to stir the Christian soul to noble deeds? But few of us have felt it. We are drivelling dwarfs, content with the small height to which we have attained, forgetful of the steep which tower above our heads. Up! Christian, up! The mount of holiness may be steep to climb, but, man, the hill of God

is a high hill, even as the hill of Bashan. Up! up! for it is only on its summit that the calm air of heaven can be breathed, and the mists of earth entirely swept away. But weak hands and feeble knees, I know, in this age, are the reasons why so few Christians attain to any eminence in the ways and works of God.

Yet, again, weak hands and feeble knees have another ill effect. They prevent our doing any great wonder for the good of the world. Oh! what work there is to do in this poor world of ours. Imagine the first colonist landing in Australia. If it had been revealed to him in a vision that, in process of time, the whole of that huge island should be ploughed, and sown, and built upon, and inhabited, he would have said, "How is this to be done? how can it ever be effected?" And, even now, great as has been the progress in that country, if we were assured that in a few short years the whole of it would be brought under tillage, we should be apt to ask, but how shall it be done? We should, however, very readily perceive that there must be strong knees to dig, and strong hands to delve and plough, or else the work never could be accomplished. Many there must be, and the many must be strong, else the work cannot be done. And now, lift up your eyes, this day! behold, the whole world lies before you like one huge untilled country. Who is to drive the ploughshare of divine grace through all the continents of this world? Who is to make this desert blossom like the rose? Who shall sow it with the good seed-corn of the kingdom of God? Where are the labourers who shall afterwards reap the whitening fields? Not weak and feeble knees; they cannot do it. Our knees must be strong and our sinews must be well braced, or else so great a work can never be accomplished. I believe one reason why the religion of Christ makes such little progress at this time, is because most of us are so weak. We find, a few centuries after Christ's death, his name was preached in every land; there was not one region of the known globe which had not heard the marvellous story of the cross. But, then, the followers of Christ were men who knew not what it was to tremble. They counted not their lives dear unto them; but leaving houses, and land, and families, for his name's sake, they went everywhere preaching the Word. But at this day we are not strong. We must all be assured of a livelihood before we will go forth to preach the Word; and, even then, if no one shall smile on us, how soon we cease the work. We commence an enterprise, but little difficulties appal us. How many does the pastor have to see, of little men and little women who come creeping to him, and whining because they find difficulties in serving Christ. Is not this because ye have weak hands and feeble knees? If ye had the strong knees of the apostles, and the mighty hands of the ancient martyrs, nothing could stand against you. Let God's children once become strong, and woe unto thee, Babylon, woe unto thee, O Rome; down must ye fall, ye castles of the enemy. The weakness of God's children is your hope, but their strength is your despair. Let them once believe firmly, let them pray earnestly, and behold Victory waits upon their banners, and dismay will seize your hearts ye enemies of Christ. We are at this time blessing God that great doors have been opened for the spread of the gospel. Hindostan, China, Japan, many lands we hope shall soon be visited by the Christian missionary. But are we not conscious that our opportunities are greater than our strength? Must not the Christian church confess that she has now a greater field, but she has, perhaps, fewer labourers than ever? The harvest is greater, but the labourers are fewer. Whence comes it? It comes from this fact, that through the church of Christ the weak hand and the feeble knee have become the general rule. "Oh," says one, "but surely there might be found some men to go out." And so say others as well as you, why are *you* not the man to go? You say others should be thrust into the vineyard, and why stand back yourself? That torpor which seizes upon us, has seized upon others too. Let us not be hasty in condemning the rest of the church, till

we have first tested ourselves. Do *we* not owe our all to Christ? Are we not *personally* his debtors? If we felt this debt, if we felt the value of souls, should not each of us give more towards the spread of this gospel? should we not pray more agonisingly? and would there not be found many of us who would be ready to labour more indefatigably. If the minister of Christ be weak, rest assured it is because the church itself is not strong. The ministry is but the index of the church. If we often fail in our pulpits, because they are not filled with fervent men, we may reply to you, if the pews were fervent, the pulpit would catch the flame. I am not speaking of water; I know that water runs down hill; but I am now speaking of fire, and fire ascends. Let the fire begin with you, be you in earnest, supplicating, striving, and wrestling with God in prayer, and the fire shall ascend to the pulpit, and we too, shall become as earnest as yourselves. Let us use no mutual recriminations. The whole church is alike at this present moment; it is all weak. There are but few and noble exceptions; but few who are strong in prayer, who are mighty in serving their God. And hence it is that Satan still retains the throne, still darkness broods over the nations, and still men are not saved. May God strengthen us, or what shall become of the world we wot not.

Again, weak hands and feeble knees very much dishonour Christ. I would say nothing to grieve the heart of any weak believer here present this morning, but still we must speak the truth. Want of faith and weakness in prayer dishonour Christ. Suppose you have a friend, and you say to him, "My friend, I have such confidence in you, that I will trust you with the title-deeds of my estate, and with all I have. Nay, more; I will trust you with my health, I will trust you with my life. Do what you will with me; I have such faith in your goodness and your wisdom that I am sure you will not be unkind, and will not err. I trust you." There is something honourable in faith to the object in whom it is reposed. Now, if you are able, with the strong hand of faith, to bring all you have and give it entire unto God, and say, "There, Lord, I surrender all to thee; do with me as thou wilt, and with mine too; take what thou wilt away; give me what thou pleasest, or withhold what thou chooseth; I leave all in thy hand; I can trust thee entirely; I know thou wilt make no mistake; I know thou wilt not treat me harshly; I leave all to thee; without word, or thought, or wish, I surrender all." If you can do this, then Christ is glorified; but if your hand is weak, and you are hiding away some choice thing that you cannot give up to him, if you do not stand fully to the surrender, but keep back something from him, then that weak hand brings dishonour upon God. So also does the feeble knee. Some one has given you a promise, that if you are in need and go to him, he will give whatever you want. You go up to his door, you knock timidly; and when he comes to meet you, you rush into the street and hide yourself, for you are ashamed that he should see you. Driven by necessity, however, you knock again; at last he comes, and you stand trembling before him. "Well," says he, "what do you want?" "You have given me a promise, sir, that when I am in need you will do so-and-so for me, and I really do not believe it: I have no confidence in you, and I do not like to ask." There would be nothing honorable in that to any man. How far different was the example of Alexander's courtier. The king said to him, "I will give to thee whatever thou requesteth;" and the man asked such a gift as almost emptied Alexander's coffers. "Ay," says the monarch, "it was a great thing for him to ask, but it is only a little thing for Alexander to give. I like the man's confidence in me, in using my word to its fullest extent." Now when the believer goes to his closet and bows there with feeble knee, and asks God to bless him and does not half believe that he will, he dishonours God. But, when a man goes up to his chamber, saying in his heart, "There is something that I want, and I am going to get it;" and he falls on his knees, and cries, "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that such a thing is necessary to me; there is thy promise; 'do as thou hast

said, 'Lord; I know thou wilt give it me.' And when he rises from his knees, and goes down and says to his friend, "The blessing will come; I have asked for it; I have prayed the prayer of faith, and God will hear me;" why, such a man honours God. I would remind you again of a great proof of all this. Look at Mr. Miller, at Ashleydown, near Bristol. Could he have built that house for orphans if he had a weak hand and a feeble knee? No. But he had a strong hand; he meant to serve his God by feeding and clothing orphans. On the other hand he had a strong knee. "Lord," he said, "I will do this enterprise—give me the means to do it." And he went to God, and did not doubt that he would do it. And, lo! thousands have rolled into his treasury, and he has never known lack; and now, seven hundred children live under his care, and are fed and clothed to the honour of God. Let us also seek to have strong hands and mighty knees, and so shall we honour God. If we do not build an orphan house to his name, yet shall we raise our Ebenezer, and leave some trophy to the honour of his grace. These are some reasons why we should look well to hands and knees.

III. And, now, the last point was this: **THERE ARE CERTAIN CAUSES OF WEAK HANDS AND FEEBLE KNEES**, and in mentioning them, I shall endeavour to correct them.

Some Christians have weak hands and feeble knees because they are only infants. They are young Christians, they have not been converted long. God's family is like every other family; we do not expect the new-born convert to run alone at first. Perhaps, it will be months, say sometimes years, before he will be able to feel his feet. We thank God that there is a very comfortable promise for those who are babes in Christ, and cannot run alone:—"He shall carry the lambs in his bosom." "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms," says God, by the prophet Hosea. So ye, just born to God, must not despair because ye cannot as yet play the man with the promise; if ye cannot now wrestle with the angel, remember, God does not require wrestling from infants. He will not overdrive his lambs. He will not overdrive his lambs. He does not expect long marches from feeble feet. As you are but weak, you shall have lighter duties. As you are at present but tender, and young, you shall not have heavy labours to perform. But seek to grow in grace. Feed upon the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, and pray that he would bring you up from babes into young men, and from young men into perfect men in Christ Jesus.

A more frequent cause, however, of weak hands and feeble knees, is starvation, absolute starvation. Is there such a thing known in England as starvation? Yes, there is of a spiritual kind. There are many houses which are dedicated to the worship of God, that certainly never were dedicated to the profit of man. There are places into which a Christian might enter all the year round, without ever getting any understanding of the doctrines of God at all. Many a minister, in these days, of fine language, and of polished rounded periods, resembles Nero, who when the city of Rome was starving, sent his galleys to Alexandria to bring back sand for the wrestlers, but not corn for hungry mouths. We have heard many a discourse that has been very fine indeed, as a moral essay, but it has had no food in it for the poor hungry mouths of God's people. One has but very little opinion of the present race of professing Christians when you see their frequent changes. I know men at this day who hear an Arminian with the greatest possible delight—"Such a dear, good, earnest man!" And if a Calvinist preaches the next Sunday, who contradicts every word the other man said—"Oh, he is such a precious creature!" because he happens to have a great flow of words. And then comes another who happens to be a hyper-Calvinist, and who says most extraordinary things—"He is a precious child of God, he preaches admirably!" And then there comes afterwards a Pelagian, or almost an Arian, and it is just the same—they take it all in, and delight in it. The reason is, because these people never taste the word of God at all. They look at it, but so long as

they do not taste it and feed on it they know nothing of it. If they fed on the Word, they would have their senses exercised by reason of the use, and they would be able to discern between the good and the evil, the precious and the vile. Many of our Calvinistic preachers do not feed God's people. They believe in election, but they do not preach it. They think particular redemption true, but they lock it up in the chest of their creed, and never bring it out in their ministry. They hold final perseverance, but they persevere in keeping quiet about it. They think there is such a thing as effectual calling, but they do not think they are called effectually to preach it. The great fault we find with many is, that they do not speak right out what they do believe. You could not know if you heard them fifty times what were the doctrines of the gospel, or what was their system of salvation. And hence God's people get starved. And all the while the only remedy they have for the poor, weak, starving child of God, is a long whip. They are always cracking this whip with the loud sound of "do this! do that! and do the other!" If they would put the whip in the manger and feed God's people, then they would be able run the heavenly race. But now it is all whip and no corn, and no creature can subsist upon that. No child of God can ever grow strong in grace with mere exhortation, if it be not associated with good old-fashioned doctrine. I should like to hear all our pulpits sounding with the old-fashioned doctrine of John Owen, and of such men as Bunyan, and Charnock, and Goodwin, and those men of olden times who knew the truth and dared to preach it fully. There were giants in those days. In every parish church in the city of London, and in this borough, too, you might have found men who were no children in divinity, but masterly men, each of them able to declare the word of God with the authority of a master in Israel. Now where find we such? We labour and we strive, we dig, we toil, we seek to be something, and we end in being nothing. And so it must be as long as hands are weak and knees are feeble; and so also must this be as long as good doctrine is denied us, and truth is kept back in the ministry. Feed God's children well; give them comfort; give them much to feed upon of the sweet things of the kingdom of God; and then they will grow strong, then they will begin to work.

But, again, fear is the great weakness of men's knees; doubt and distrust are the great relaxers of the strength of men's hands. He that hath faith in God is almost omnipotent; he that hath might in prayer (through the Holy Spirit), is quite so. He that believeth God with all his heart, there is none in the world that can match with him; and he that prayeth to God with all fervency of soul, may overcome the divine omnipotence itself, and move the arm that moves the world. Give a man faith, and he is in the midst of his enemies, like a lion amid a herd of dogs, he sweeps them away. With what an easy motion of his gigantic strength he rips them open and lays them dead. Nothing can stand against the man who believes. He plants his standard in the midst of rocks: he stands up to it and draws his sword, and cries, "Come one, come all: this rock shall fly from its firm base as soon as I; I am a match for you; I believe, and therefore have I spoken; I believe still, and therefore do I speak again; and I will not move though hell and earth come against me." But when a man becomes doubting and timid, where is his strength? The moment you doubt away goes your might. Strong feet make a man mighty, but a strong knee makes him mightier still. Christ's soldiers always win their battles on their knees. On their feet they may be conquered, but on their knees they are invincible. The praying legion is the thundering legion. Napoleon sent out his old guard in the last extremity of the battle of Waterloo. They had always carried victory with them, but they were at last defeated. But the old guard of the church of Christ is the legion of prayer. The men that are mighty on their knees, these never have been defeated. When they march on in steady phalanx,, they are mightier than the push of bayonet, though British arms and British hearts should drive the

bayonet home. Nothing can stand against men that pray. Let the church but once fall on its knees, and it shall have might to make the enemy fall on ITS knees—not in prayer, but in terror and dismay. Other warriors cry, “Up guards and at them!” Our cry is, “Down, guards, on your knees, and at them!” There, on your knees you become mighty; you draw near to the great seat of God, and then you draw near to the fountain of your strength and of your triumph. Fear, then, must be got rid of. We must labour with God, that he would be pleased to give us strong faith; that we may not doubt the word of God, nor doubt our interest, nor doubt his love, nor doubt our perseverance, but may believe and become mighty, having no longer weak hands and feeble knees.

Let me add one more thought only; namely this, that sloth may make a man weak in his hands and in his feet. Arms become strong by using them. The blacksmith gets a brawny hand by constantly using his hammer. He who climbs the mountain, or walks many a mile a day, becomes strong in his feet. Those who sit still and walk but a little while are wearied with a few miles; but those who have tramped through continents are not speedily to be wearied. Use makes us strong, but sloth enfeebles us. There are many of you who might be stronger if you laboured more. What a lazy corporation the church of Christ is! Taking it all round there must be, I think, more lazy people in the church of Christ than there is to be found in any other body of men. There are some that do valiantly and serve God, but how many of you there are who are quite content to occupy your seats and hear sermons without doing anything for God’s cause. I do not hesitate to say that I believe there are many of you here who never won a soul to Christ in your lives, and scarcely ever tried to do so. You never lay poor souls to heart; you never go to God in heart and prayer for your poor perishing neighbours. Now and then, if you see a drunken man, you say “it is a great pity;” and if you hear of a murder, you say “it is a dreadful thing.” But very little you care about it. You do not agonize and cry for the iniquity of this land. What do you do? You put a sixpence in the plate now and then, and that is your gift to God’s cause; you sing a hymn or join in prayer, and that is your service to God. The custom with religious people is, they pay their seat-rent, they attend the chapel, and then they have done their duty. And even in the ministry itself, you hear of a clergyman speaks of doing his duty, when he reads his prayer and when he has done his preaching. But we want to have warmer hearts, and more active lives, or else, surely, the church must die of sloth. Oh that every one of you would think you had something to do for Christ in this life, and that you must do it. If your knees are feeble, serve God the best you can with them; if your hands hang down, then do the best you can with the hands hanging down, and pray God to strengthen them, until you become mighty, and then you will be able to do more. But do something every one of you. If England expects every one to do his duty, how much more may the church demand of every professor that he should be doing something for his Master. Do not think it is enough to get good; *do good*. The candle must soon be extinguished that is shut up without fresh air. Give your light plenty of air, and it will burn all the brighter; and others seeing your light will be able to rejoice in it. You are not to eat your morsel alone; if you do you will become weak, for God hath so ordained it; that if we keep our religion to ourselves it will become feeble. The man who hoards his gold grows no richer, but he who puts it out to usury, will grow richer himself and help to enrich other men. Do so with your religion; put it out to usury, and you will grow richer, water men’s souls, and you shall be watered. The most practical way for religious people is to do something; visit the sick, help the poor, teach the ignorant, succour the distressed; and in all these ways you will find that God will bless you, and your hands shall become strong, and your knees shall not totter. Above all, cry for the Holy Spirit to strengthen you, for without him all is vain.

The Bed and Its Covering

A Sermon

(No. 244)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, January 9th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.”—Isaiah 28:20.

GOD HAS SO made men, that there are two things essential for their comfort, if not for their very existence, namely, *sleep and clothing*. Had God so pleased it, he might have made man an everlasting watcher, upon whose eyes the mists of night never should descend, and upon whose eyelids the fingers of sleep never should be placed. Perhaps angelic spirits never sleep. Day without night they circle God’s throne rejoicing, and ceaselessly they chant his praise. Perhaps their unflagging wings are always stretched for duty, and their untiring voices are ever occupied with song. But manifestly it is not so with man. We need “kind nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep.” If we could not sleep, should we not even wish for death? Let sleep be long withholder from our eyelids, if we had no other disease our strength must become prostrate, and the fire of life would smoulder into the ashes of death. Sleep, therefore, is essential even to the very existence of our bodies on earth. Clothing also is needful for our comfort, and, at least in some climates, absolutely necessary for our very existence. God has made the animal creation of such a kind, that they grow their clothing upon their own backs. For the horse and for the sheep no loom works, nor cloth the shuttle hasten in its course. Their backs are their own webs, and they fashion their own garments, as if to teach us, that man alone is imperfect, and needs to long beyond himself: Other creatures can readily find their own habitations, and produce for themselves out of themselves; but man feels his nakedness, and must either seek for the fig leaf of his own righteousness, or else the Lord God must make for him a dress with which he may array himself and stand completely covered. Dress, I say, is essential to man—dress and sleep.

Now, I think it may be readily granted, that man’s body is, after all, only a picture of his inner being: just what the body needs materially, that the soul needs spiritually. The soul, then, needs two things. It requires rest, which is pictured to us in sleep. The soul needs a bed upon which it may repose quietly and take its ease. And, again, the soul needs covering, for as a naked body would be both uncomfortable, unseemly, and dangerous; much more would the naked soul be unhappy, noxious to the eye of God, and utterly miserable in itself.

Now, our text tells us that men have sought for rest and for clothing where they are not to be found; that they have gone about to make a bed for themselves which is shorter than that they can stretch themselves upon it; and that they have also sought to make coverings for themselves which have turned out to be narrower than that they can wrap themselves in them.

We shall speak, first, of *what man has done, and of his vain and futile attempts to find rest and clothing for his soul*; and then, afterward, we shall briefly attempt to show *how God has accomplished this*, and has given to the believer a couch upon which he can to his utmost length and yet find that the bed is long enough, and how the Lord has given him a garment in which he may grow, but he

shall always find that, broad as he shall become in the magnitude of his experience or of his sin, yet shall this covering be always broad enough to cover him.

I. Well, then, let us take the first figure. The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it. **MEN TRY, THEN, TO MAKE BEDS ON WHICH THEIR SOULS MAY REST.** One of the most uncomfortable things in the world, I should think, would be a spare bed—a bed so spare that a man should not have room stretch himself on it. I cannot conceive how miserable a poor wretch must be who would be condemned to seek an unresting rest, an uneasy ease on a couch shorter than his body. But that is just the condition of all men while they are seeking a rest anywhere else but in the “rest that remaineth for the people of God.” With reference to a man’s *present* aims, and present attainments, all that he can ever get on earth is a bed shorter than that he can stretch himself on it. Then, in the next place, we shall notice as to the future world, that all that man can do, if we come to consider it, is too little to give ease to the heart.

First then as to the present world, how many beds are there of man’s own invention. One man has made himself a bedstead of *gold*; the pillars thereof are of silver, the covering thereof is of Tyrian purple, the pillows are filled with down, such as only much fine gold could buy him; the hangings he hath embroidered with threads of gold and silver, and the curtains are drawn upon rings of ivory. Lo, this man hath ransacked creation for luxuries, and invented to himself all manner of sumptuous delights. He gets unto himself broad acres and many lands; he adds house to house, and field to field; he digs, he toils, he labors, he is in hopes that he shall get enough, a sufficiency, a satisfactory inheritance. He proceeds from enterprise to enterprise, he invests his money in one sphere of labor, and then another. He attempts to multiply his gold, until it gets beyond all reckoning. He becomes a merchant prince, a millionaire, and he says unto himself; ‘Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast much goods laid up for many years.’ Do you not envy this man his bed? Are there not some of you, whose only object in life is to get such a couch for yourselves? You say, “He has well-feathered his nest; would to God that I could do the same for myself!” Ah, but do you know that this bed is shorter than that he can stretch himself upon it? If *you* cast yourself upon it for a moment, the bed is long enough *for you*, but it is not long enough *for him*. I have often thought that many a man’s riches would be sufficient for me, but they are not sufficient *for him*. If he makes them his God, and seeks in them his happiness, you never find the man has money enough, his lands are still too narrow and his estate too small. When he begins to stretch himself, he finds there is something wanted; if the bed could only be made a little longer, then, he thinks, he could be quiet and have room enough. But when the bed is lengthened, he finds *he* has grown longer, too, and when his fortune has grown as big as the bedstead of Og, king of Bashan, even then he finds he cannot lie upon it easily. Nay, we read of one man who stretched himself along the whole world which he had conquered; but he found there was no room, and he began to weep because there were not other worlds to conquer. One would have thought a little province would have been enough for him to rest in. Oh, no; so big is man when he stretches himself, that the whole world does not suffice him. Nay, if God should give to the avaricious all the mines of Peru, all the glittering diamonds of Golconda, all the wealth of worlds, and if he were then to transmute the stars into gold and silver, and make us emperors of an entire universe till we should talk of constellations as men talk of hundreds, yea, and talk of universes as often talk of thousands, even then the bed would not be long enough whereon we might stretch our ever-lengthening desires. The soul is wider than creation, broader than space; give it all, it would be still unsatisfied, and man would not find rest. You say, “That is strange: if I had a little more I should be very well satisfied.” You make a

mistake: if you are not content with what you have you would not be satisfied if it were doubled. "Nay," says one, "I should be." You do not know yourself. If you have fixed your affection on the things of this world, that affection is like a horse-leech; it cries, "Give! give!" It will suck, suck, suck to all eternity, and still cry, "Give, give!" and though you give it all, it has not gotten enough. The bed, in fact, "is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it."

Let us look in another direction. Other men have said. "Well. I do not care for gold and silver; thank God I have no avarice." But they have been *ambitious*. "Oh," says one, "it I might be famous, what would I not do? Oh, if my name might be handed down to posterity, as having done something, and having been somebody, a man of note, how satisfied would I be!" And the man has so acted that he has at last made for himself a bed of honor. He has become famous. There is scarce a newspaper which does not record his name. His name is become a household word; nations listen to his voice; thousands of trumpets proclaim his deeds. He is a man, and the world knows it, and stamps him with the adjective "great:" he is called "a great man." See how soft and downy is his bed. What would some of you give to rest upon it! He is fanned to sleep by the breath of fame, and the incense of applause smokes in his chamber. The world waits to refresh him with renewed flattery. Oh, would you not give your ears and eyes if you might have a bed like that to rest upon. But did you ever read the history of famous men, or hear them tell their tale in secret? "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown," even though it be the laurel coronet of honor. When the man is known, it is not enough; he asks for wider praise. There was a time when the approbation of a couple of old women was a fame to him; now the approbation of ten thousand is nothing. He talks of men as if they were but flocks of wild asses and what he looked up to once as a high pinnacle is now beneath his feet. He must go higher and higher, and higher, though his head is reeling, though his brain is whirling, though his feet are slipping, he must go higher. He has done a great thing; he must do more. He seems to stride across the world; he must leap further yet, for the world will never believe a man famous unless he constantly outdoes himself. He must not only do a great thing to-day, but he must do a greater thing to-morrow, the next day a greater still, and pile his mountains one upon another until he mounts the very Olympus of the demigods. But suppose he gets there, what does he say? "Oh, that I could go back to my cottage, that I might be all unknown, that I might have rest with my family and be quiet. Popularity is a care which I never endured until now, a trouble that I never guessed. Let me lose it all; let me go back." He is sick of it; for the fact is, that man never can be satisfied with anything less than the approbation of heaven; and until conscience gets that, all the applause of senates and of listening princes, would be a bed shorter than a man could stretch himself upon it.

There is another bed on which man thinks he could rest. There is a watch, a painted harlot, who wears the richest gems in her ears and a necklace of precious things about her neck. She is an old deceiver. She was old and shrivelled in the days of Bunyan; she painted herself then, she paints now, and paint she will as long as the world endureth. And she gaddeth forth, and men think her young and fair and lovely, and desirable: her name is Madam Wanton. She keeps a house wherein; she feasteth men, and maketh them drunken with the wine of *pleasure*, which is as honey to the taste, but is venom to the soul. This witch, when she can, entices men into her bed. "There," she says, "there, how daintily have I spread it!" It is a bed, the pillars whereof are pleasure; above is the purple of rapture and beneath is the soft repose of luxurious voluptuousness. Oh, what a bed is this! Solomon once laid in it, and many since his time have sought their rest there. They have said, "Away with your gold and silver: let me spend it, that I may eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow

I die. Tell me not of fame, I care not for it. I would sooner have the pleasures of life, or the joys of Bacchus, than the laurel of fame. Let me give myself up to the intoxication of this world's delights, let me be drowned in the butt of Burgundy of this world's joys." Have you ever seen such men as that? I have seen many and wept over them, and I know some now, they are stretching themselves on that bed, and trying to make themselves happy. Byron is just a picture of such men, though he outdid others. What a bed was that he stretched for himself. Was ever libertine more free in his vices? was ever sinner more wild in his blasphemy? was ever poet more daring in his flights of thought? was ever man more injurious to his fellows than he? And yet what did Byron say? There is a verse which just tells you what he felt in his heart. The man had all that he wanted of sinful pleasure, but here is his confession—

"I fly like a bird of the air,
In search of a home and a rest;
A balm for the sickness of care,
A bliss for a bosom unblest."

And yet he found it not. He had no rest in God. He tried pleasure till his eyes were red with it; he tried vice till his body was sick; and he descended into his grave a premature old man. If you had asked him, and he had spoken honestly, he would have said, the bed was shorter than that he could stretch himself upon it. No, young man, you may have all the vices, and all the pleasure and mirth of this metropolis, and there is much to be found, of which I make no mention here, and when you have it all, you will find it does not equal your expectation nor satisfy your desires. When the devil is bringing you one cup of spiced wine, you will be asking him next time to spice it higher; and he will flavour it to your fiery taste, but you will be dissatisfied still, until at last, if he were to bring you a cup hot as damnation, it would fall tasteless on your palate. You would say, "Even this is tasteless to me, except in the gall, and bitter wormwood, and fire that it brings." It is so with all worldly pleasure: there is no end to it; it is a perpetual thirst. It is like the opium eater; he eats a little, and he dreams such strange wonders; and he wakes, and where are they? Such dreamers, when awake, look like dead men, with just animation enough to enable them to crawl along. The next time, to get to their elysium, they must take more opium, and the next time more and more, and all the while, they are gradually going down an inclined plane into their graves. That is just the effect of human pleasure, and all worldly sensual delights; they only end in destruction; and even while they last, they are not wide enough for our desire, they are not large enough for our expectations, "for the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it."

Now think, for a moment, of the Christian, and see the picture reversed. I will suppose the Christian at his very worst state, though there is no reason why I should do so. The Christian is not necessarily poor; he may be rich. Suppose him poor. He has not a foot of land to call his own; he lives by the day, and he lives well, for his Master keeps a good cupboard for him, and furnishes him with all he requires. He has nothing in this world except the promise of God with regard to the future. The worldly man laughs at the promise, and says it is good for nothing. Now look at the Christian; he says,—

"There's nothing round this spacious globe,
Which suits my large desires;"
To nobler joys than nature give,
Thy servant, Lord, aspires.

What, poor man, are you perfectly content? “Yes,” says he, “it is my Father’s will that I should live in poverty. I am perfectly content.” “Well, but is there nothing else you wish for?” “Nothing,” says he, “I have the presence of God; I have delight in communion with Christ; ‘I know that there is laid up for me a crown of life that fadeth not away,’ and more I cannot want. I am perfectly content; my soul is at rest.” In the Christian religion there is a rest that no one can enjoy elsewhere. Oh! I can say as in the sight of God, my soul is perfectly at rest. “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter-day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” I know that my sins are forgiven, that I am accepted in the beloved. I know there is nothing more that I want except what I have already, for Christ is all and more than all. What can my soul desire more? As for temporals I can leave them in my Father’s hands; as for spirituals I can leave them also with him. “My soul is even as a wearied child,” resting on its mother’s breast. Nothing more I can ask. And now let me stretch myself upon this bed. Let me think of the largest desire that heart ever had, and I find it not at all greater than this bed. What do I ask for? I ask for immortality, I have it here. What do I pant for? I pant for ceaseless, boundless bliss, I have it here. I pant to be God’s child, I have it here. I pant to be rich to all intents of bliss, I have the promise here, and I shall have the fruition of it hereafter. I long for perfection. Is that a stretch indeed? And *that* I have, “perfect in Christ Jesus.” I have the promise that “the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.” Oh! I wish you would try and stretch yourselves a moment. Come, let your spirits stretch themselves with all their might. Put out your hands till they grasp the east and west, and let your head and feet lie at either pole of this round world, and is there not room for you in the promise, room in the gospels Nay, reach into the far-off eternity, and let your soul desire the utmost it can conceive, and still the bed is long enough:—“He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what you can ask or even think.” Now, try and think your best, and he shall exceed it; come and ask your most, and God shall give you more. Oh! blessed is the sleep of the Christian. He sleeps in a bed supported by the everlasting arms of the Saviour. He sleeps there fanned by the breath of the Spirit, and knowing that when he wakes up he shall wake up in the likeness of his Saviour, in the likeness of his God.

Thus, I think I have given you some idea of the meaning of this text, “The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it.” Now, just for a moment think of this bed in the sense of *another world*. And here we may say of all the sinner’s hope, that it is a bed shorter than that he can stretch himself upon it, Sinner, thou that art without God and without Christ, ask thyself this question, What is thy bed for eternity? What is thy rest in another world? Perhaps, that is a question you have never asked yourself. Ask it now. “Oh,” says one, “I am no worse than my neighbors.” Is that bed long enough for eternity? Nay, assuredly not. “Nay,” says one, “I care not how I shall fare, I shall take my fate.” And is that long enough for eternity? You cannot draw any consolation from that when you stand at God’s bar. “Nay,” says another, “I won’t think about it.” And is that long enough for eternity? “Ah,” cries another, “I go to church, and chapel, and so forth, and that will do.” Is that long enough for eternity? You have now to stretch yourself. Let conscience strain you, let death put you on the rack, and pull you out a little, and the bed is not long enough for you. You are obliged to feel that you are uneasy. Nay, there is not a man out of Christ that is not uneasy at times. Harden your conscience as you may, sometimes it will arouse you. Put Mr. Conscience down in a back street, so that the daylight cannot come to him, but you cannot silence him; he has a voice as loud as thunder, and sometimes he will awaken you. I do not care who the infidel is, or what he says: it is mere brag, there is nothing in it. Men who cannot fight are always very big before

they come to the battle. So it is with the Infidel, the Atheist, the Socinian; they are very great men when they talk to us, but they know they have none of the greatness that they pretend to; they have none really, for their own consciences cannot rest. I do affirm, again, that there is no man who has a solid peace, a perfect satisfaction in his own mind, but the man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusts him entirely for his soul's salvation, and puts his hopes and his expectations only in the Lord his God. That man has a bed that is large enough; though he were himself as tall as the heavens, and as broad as the earth.

II. Now for the second part of my text. MEN MUST HAVE A COVERING. And here we are told that there are some people who make a covering, but it is narrower than they can wrap themselves in it. There is one garment, friends, that never is too narrow, though the sinner be the hugest sinner that ever trod this earth, and that is the garment of the perfect righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides that, there is none other long enough or broad enough.

Now, there are some sinners that think they have clothed themselves, when they have only made for themselves a nightcap. Don't smile—that's a fact. There are spiritual nightcaps to be bought in London. "What is that?" says one. Well it is woven in the loom of hyper-calvinism. It is high doctrine cut off from God's Word, taken away from its connection, taken altogether away from that part of divine truth with which we have most to do as sinners, and it is made into an antidote for all the twitchings of man's conscience, and into a soporific whereby souls are sent to sleep, preparatory to their being cast into the arms of Satan. Men get into their heads a doctrinal opinion. That opinion is right, true, good—I will preach that opinion against any man; but men forget that opinions are not evidences of salvation if the walk and conversation are not right. They read, for instance, such a passage as this: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Well, they say, "I am in Christ Jesus; there is no condemnation for me!" they put that on their heads, they go to sleep in it, and they think they are covered, because they have simply wrapped this false covering about their heads. They have a blindfold about their eyes, and they cannot see their nakedness, and therefore, they think there is no such thing. Oh, I am grieved to think that there are men who flatter that craving of corrupt nature, after something that is not salvation by Christ. You may as easily be destroyed by trusting in good doctrine as by trusting in good works; for recollect, beloved, that believing right, will no more save you, (if it is only believing right doctrine) than doing right will save you. It is believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and receiving his spirit and being made like unto him, is the only salvation that will stand the test of the day of judgment. I used to have a man sitting in front of the gallery, (not in this chapel,) but he used always to nod his head when I was preaching a doctrine; and I remember once, I thought I would cure that old gentleman of nodding his head, for he was about as bad a rascal as ever lived. Whenever I preached about justification, down went his head. Whenever I preached about imputed righteousness, down went his head. I was a dear man, no doubt about that; and so I thought I would cure him, and make his head keep still for once. So I remarked "there is a great deal of difference between God electing you, and your electing yourself, a vast deal of difference between God justifying you by his spirit, and your justifying yourself by a belief that you are justified when you are not; and this is the difference;" said I to the old man, who then put me down for a rank Arminian; "you who have elected yourselves, and justified yourselves, you have no marks of the Spirit; you have no evidence of piety; you are not holy; you live in sin; you can walk as sinners walk; you have the image of the devil upon you, and yet you think you are the children of God." And, now, I say to any here present who are indulging in the same abominable hypocrisy, this is a spiritual delusion

whereby many believe a lie; and the time will come when some of us will have to speak as sharply against men who preach doctrine without practice, as we have to preach against those who preach not the doctrine of free, sovereign, distinguishing grace. High doctrine will never cover you. It will only cover you head; it is a logical covering, made of the right sort of stuff; but it is only a headpiece, and that is not a complete covering for the naked man.

Now, again, there are some other people who are not content with that. They do not care particularly about this covering for the head, but they think they will get a pair of slippers, and thus cover their nakedness. "What do you mean by that?" says one. Well, good works. "Ah!" they say, "those doctrinal people, they look to the head; I don't care about the head, I shall look to the feet." And so they look to the feet, and they make themselves very decent sort of people, too. They keep the Sabbath, they frequent the house of God, they read the Bible, they say a form of prayer, and they try to be honest, sober, and so forth. Very right. I do not say a word against slippers, only that they are not a good covering for the whole man I do not say a word against good slippers; good works are very well, but they are not sufficient. Good works are like a pair of shoes, but do not let a man think a pair of shoes can become wide enough to cover his whole body. Such men are deluded. They think, if their outward walks and conversation is good, and right, and proper, that, therefore, their whole nakedness is covered. Oh! never delude yourselves into such an idea as that. Though you walk in the commandments of the Lord, blameless in the eyes of all men, yet so long as sin is in your heart, and the past sin of your life is unforgiven, you stand helpless, unclothed souls, in the estimation of God, and your garment is too narrow that you may wrap yourself in it. I have seen some poor souls trying to wrap themselves up in good works, and they were not long enough. "Oh," says one, "come here, and I will tie on a bit for you." And so he brings out a yard of good old stuff that is called "Baptism," and he tags on that. "Stop," he says, by-and-bye, "I will bring out something else made by a Bishop, called "Confirmation," and another yard is put on. "Wait awhile!" says the man, "you shall have a yard of something else;" and then there is a yard of what is called "Communion," or "Sacrament," put on. "Now, hold hard; you know the Catechism, and say it often; you know the prayers proper to be used at sea, on the land, and the prayers for weddings, baptisms, and churchings; and now," say they, "by degrees the garment will be made long enough to go round you." I have seen the poor souls tug and pull it, to make both ends meet, but they could not. I could tell you the experience of a member of this church. She says, "I attended a place of worship regularly, and tried to work out a righteousness for myself. I could not do it, At last I took to attending daily service in the Puseyite Church. I became the most righteous over-much that you could suppose a person to be. I was never satisfied. I tried sacraments, fasting, private prayer—never good enough; never could get up to the mark; never felt that the garment was broad enough in which I could wrap myself." No, and you never will. All the good works in the world, and all the ceremonies, and all the praises of men, and all the almsgiving, cannot make a covering broad enough in which to wrap yourself. Shall I tell you what is sufficient? It is the garment that is "without seam, woven from the top throughout;" a garment woven by the bleeding hands of Jesus, and then dyed in his own blood. If by faith you can put this garment on, it is broad enough to cover you; though you were wide as giant Goliath, and though your heads reached to the very clouds, it should be long enough for all your needs.

So you see that these coverings which men have sought for are not sufficient. Now, there are some people who are not very particular about the head, or the feet, but they come nearer the mark—they have been more particular about the loins. They gird themselves with a little garment.

Their religion is to think. they like to sit at home and think over the Scripture, to think over certain doctrinal particulars, and meditate upon them. They think, for instance, one church is not right, and they leave that and join another. But they find that is not right; they tithe the mint there, but they do not tithe the cummin. And they go to another, where they tithe the cummin, but where they do not fast six days in the week. The religion of such a person as this, is the religion of picking holes in other people's religion. Do you say, "Are there any people of that sort?" Yes, I know several of them; they are very good souls, if you estimate them by their own opinion, but if you estimate them by the law and by the statutes of God, you will find them different. They think that all they need to do is simply to feel that they are conscientious in what they are doing. It is very proper and right that they should be conscientious. I am not going to speak against the garments round the loins, they are very good; I only speak against a man thinking that is enough. I do not speak against their nightcaps or slippers, or against the garment round the loins, they are all good in their places; I only speak of putting these instead of the complete raiment of Christ. You may be baptised and re-baptised; you may go from one sect to another, and secede, and secede, and you will be none the better unless you are clothed in the matchless, spotless, seamless righteousness of the Lord.

Now, let us bring forth that robe, and let us stand in that. What Jesus did, and what Jesus suffered, is the inheritance of the believer. Now, let the believer be never so full of sin, what Jesus suffered covers all his sin. Let him be never so full of want, the fullness of Jesus supplies it all. Let him be never so loathsome in his own sight, the beauty of Christ makes him comely. Let him be cast down in his own experience, the exaltation of Christ makes him to sit together with him in heavenly places. There are times when the convinced sinner grows great in sin. He feels himself as if he were bloated with iniquity; but even then the garment of Christ is wide enough to wrap him about. Sometimes he grows so tall in his sin, he feels as if he were proud as Lucifer; he casts the cowl of the Saviour's righteousness over his head, and it covers him even then. His feet sometimes seem to tread the very bottom of the ocean, but the long robe of the Saviour's righteousness sweeps the bottom of the sea when the feet of the believer are standing there. All is longer, all is higher, all is broader than all the height, depth, and length, and breadth of our backslidings, our iniquities and sins.

What a glorious thing, then it is to be a Christian, to have faith in Christ, to have the Isaac born in our hearts, the new nature put there. Come my soul, take thy rest, the great High Priest has full atonement made. Thou hast much goods laid up, not for many years, but for eternity; take thine ease; eat spiritual things; drink wine on the lees and be merry; for it cannot be said of thee, "to-morrow thou shalt die," for thou shalt never die, for "thy life is hid with Christ in God." Thou art no fool to take thy ease and rest, for this is legitimate ease and rest, the rest which the God of Sabaoth hath provided for all his people. And then, O Christian! march boldly to the river of death, march calmly up to the throne of judgment, enter placidly and joyfully into the inheritance of thy Lord, for thou hast about thee an armor that can keep thee from the arrows of death, a wedding garment that makes thee fit to sit down at the banquet of the Lord. Thou hast about thee a royal robe that makes thee a fit companion even for Jesus, the king of kings, when he shall admit thee into his secret chambers, and permit thee to hold holy and close fellowship with him. I cannot resist quoting that verse of the hymn,—

"With thy Saviour's garment on,
Thou'rt holy as the Holy One."

That is the sum and substance of it all. And on this bed let us take our rest, and during this week let us make Christ's work our only garment, and we shall find it long enough, and broad enough, for us to wrap ourselves up in it.

The Way to God

A Sermon

(No. 245)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 27th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”—St. John 14:6.

THERE ARE many men in this world, who so far from coming to God, are going as far as they can from him. Nothing would delight such men so much as to be clean rid of his presence, and to be entirely escaped from the bounds of his dominions. They would be content to make their bed in hell, if they could thus find a satisfactory answer to the question, “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” Their hearts are at enmity with God; they hate his words and his ways. They know that God is angry with them; and they in return are angry with God. There is another class, who are but very little in advance of these. It cannot be said of them, with the same emphatic meaning, that they actually hate God, but nevertheless they run from him. Perhaps they would indignantly repel a charge of abhorring God, but nevertheless, it is true of them, that they live in utter disregard of him. They say in their hearts “No God.” God is not in all their thoughts. They may have sublime thoughts of nature, but few yearnings after *him* who made nature. They think much of time, and sense, and of the things that are below; but as to eternity and its substantial realities, the things that are unseen and everlasting, these they scarce can think upon. “Beware, ye that forget God,” for your state is no better than the state of those I first described. “The wicked shall be turned into hell.” those who hate God shall feel his torment, but so shall their companions, for thus runs the text, “The wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God.” It is not needful that you should hate God; that you should go to war with him in order to destroy yourself; the simple neglect of him is enough to ruin you. Thus has the apostle put it, “How shall we escape if we *neglect* so great salvation?” Ye need not fly upon the thick bosses of Jehovah’s buckler, ye need not rush upon the point of his glittering spear. Stand still and do nothing; regard him not; shut your eyes to his existence, and engross yourself with the grovelling toys of earth, and ye have as surely destroyed yourselves, as if ye had defied him to his face. Neglect of God is the open gate of damnation. To forget God is to ensure a portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. There is to be found, however, upon the face of the earth a third class of men, who would not like to be classed among the enemies of God and who can truly say that they are not utterly indifferent with regard to his favor. They would prefer to be numbered with those who are seeking God. Their desire is to go to their Father. They may not as yet, perhaps, be brought to that only way at coming which he has ordained, but still their profession is that they desire to worship God, and to come before him with thanksgiving, and show themselves glad in him. It is to this very character, one that has so much that is hopeful in it, that I shall address myself particularly this morning; but indeed, to every one in this assembly, would I desire to preach the great truth of the text. No man—desire he never so earnestly, labor he never so diligently—no man cometh unto the Father, but by Jesus Christ.

When Adam was perfect in the garden of Eden, God walked with him in the cool of the day. God and man held the most intimate and affectionate intercourse with one another. Man was a happy creature, God was a condescending Creator, and the two met together and held sweet converse and communion. But from the moment when Adam touched the forbidden fruit, the way from God to man became blocked up, the bridge was broken down, a great gulph was fixed, so that if it had not been for the divine plan of grace, we could not have ascended to God, neither could God in justice come down to us. Happily, however, the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, had provided for this great catastrophe. Christ Jesus the Mediator had in old eternity been ordained to become the medium of access between man and God. If you want a figure of him, remember the memorable dream of Jacob. He laid him down in a solitary place, and he dreamed a dream, which had in it something more substantial than anything he had seen with his eyes wide open. He saw a ladder, the foot whereof rested upon earth, and the top thereof reached to heaven itself. Upon this ladder he saw angels ascending and descending. Now this ladder was Christ. Christ in his humanity rested upon the earth, he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. In his divinity he reaches to the highest heaven, for he is very God of very God. When our prayers ascend on high they must tread the staves of this ladder, and when God's blessings descend to us, the rounds of this marvellous ladder must be the means of their descent. Never has a prayer ascended to God save through Jesus Christ. Never has a blessing come down to man save through the same Divine Mediator. There is now a highway, a way of holiness wherein the redeemed can walk to God, and God can come to us. The king's highway,—

“The way the holy prophets went—

The road that leads from banishment.”

Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

Let us think for a moment of Jesus Christ as the way to God. The reason why man cannot come to God as he did in the garden is, that God is the same, but man is changed. God is as affectionate and as condescending as ever, but man is unholy and impure. Now, God is as pure as he is affectionate, while God is love it is just as true that God is infinitely just and holy. His holy eyes cannot endure iniquity. If, then, a sinful creature could obtain access to God, if a rebellious creature could come into the immediate presence of the Most High, the effect must be disastrous in the extreme, for it would be a necessity of God's nature that he must utterly devour the creature in which he sees sin to be. Come into the presence of God, O sinner, and thou mightest as well march into a consuming fire. As Nebuchadnezzar's furnace burned the men who came to throw in the three holy children so must God, the consuming fire, burn and destroy us, even if we approach him with our prayers and thanksgivings, were it not for the interposition of Jesus Christ the Mediator. I say, this is a necessity of his nature. God is necessarily just, and justice cannot endure a sin. God is necessarily pure and holy: he might sooner cease to be God than cease to be pure. Now, the approach of impurity to him he must repel. Though no laws can bind him, yet the law of his nature never can be broken. His nature is, “I will by no means clear the guilty.” He is slow to anger, he is great in power, and he is ready to forgive, but so long as guilt lies unforgiven he is also ready to punish, nay, he must punish or else cease to be. Consequently, no man can come to God as a sinner, unless he comes to him to be utterly destroyed, and that without remedy. You do not wish so to come to God. Happy is it, then, that we are enabled to tell to all our fellow-creatures of a way whereby we can come with joy and gladness to the Father, through Jesus Christ.

Now, this morning I shall have to divide my subject into three or four heads, and notice.—

I. Some men have a desire to come to God in *worship*, but there are many who desire to come to him the wrong way. You will sometimes meet with men who say, “Well, I do not go up to a church or chapel it is all ridiculous. I do not read the Bible; I have no faith in Christ; but I spend my Sunday in the open air—in that glorious temple which God has built. How divinely can I worship him there, while ‘the lark, singing, up to heaven’s gate ascends;’ while every flower tells me of him whose breath perfumes it, and whose pencil paints; while all the cattle on a thousand hills are lowing forth his his; praise feel that in his temple doth everyone speak of his glory. What need for me to go and hear what you call the gospel, to join in the united song of praise, or bend my knee in prayer? I worship the god of nature,” says such a man, “not the God of revelation, but the god of nature.” To this man we reply in the words of our text. Your thanksgiving and your praise are unacceptable to the God you worship, for that God has declared that no man cometh to him except through his Son, Jesus Christ. If then, you reject the way of access, and persist in bringing your prayers and your thanksgivings to him in a way which he does not acknowledge, remember, this shalt thou have as the answer to thy prayers and thy thanksgivings; thou shalt lie down in sorrow when God shall come to judge thee at the last great day. The true Christian can “go from nature up to nature’s God,” because he has come from nature’s God down to nature. No man can climb the steeps, and “go from nature up to nature’s God,” unless he has first descended. God must take thee up into the mount where he dwells, first, and then thou canst come down, as Moses did from the top of Sinai; but, until he hath caught thee up thither, thy weary feet shall be exhausted, and thy strength decay, ere thou canst reach the God of nature through his works. Not my friend, you may be very sincere, as you imagine, in all your prayers and thanksgivings offered to the unpropitiated God of nature, in your garden, or in the fields, but, sincere though they be, they miss the mark; they are not shot from a bow which is strong enough to carry them to their desired target. They miss the mark, I say, and they shall fall back on thine own head to thy injury, but they shall not reach the throne of God.

But I observe here, that those men who talk about natural religion, as far as I know them, have no religion at all. I have noticed that the people who say, “I can worship God without attending any religious service, or believing in Jesus,” do not really do so. I have sometimes had an opportunity on a Sunday of seeing many worshippers of the god of nature come down the lane where I reside. They consist, for the most part, of men who carry cages with them in which to catch birds on the common. There is another very respectable confraternity of men, who go to a boxing-place somewhere about there, where they spend their day in the bowling alley, and divers pugilistic encounters. These might adopt the cry of our genteel sinners, “We don’t want to go into a church or chapel: we spend our Sunday in the worship of the god of nature.” And very fine worship it is. I mostly find that those people who worship the “god of nature” worship the god of *fallen* nature—that is, the devil: not the God of the glorious nature which is spread about us in the roaring sea, the rolling flood and the blooming meads—no, for the most part, the men who talk like that, know in their own conscience, that the god they worship, is their belly, their own lusts; and they glory in their shame. Don’t believe all the nonsense that you hear from the Sunday league and all that, when they talk about worshipping the god of nature. Do they do it? Follow any of them into their privacy, and see whether any of this fine devotion of theirs, has any existence whatever, and I think you will discover at once, that they are greater hypocrites than the men they call hypocrites.

But again, is it not rather a suspicious circumstance, that these men who are so much ahead of us, that they worship the god of nature prefer the company, according to their own confession, of

sheep, and bullocks and horses, and skylarks, to the presence of the saints of God? It looks rather suspicious, when a man finds more congenial company in a sheepfold than he does in an assembly of intelligent beings. It looks as if his own mind were brutish, when he can never get his spirit wound up into devotion till he gets into the midst of brutes. For my part, I feel more able to worship God in the great congregation, in the assembly of the saints, than anywhere else: "In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem; praise ye the Lord!" I know that all his works praise him. It is my joy to feel, that the changing seasons are but the varied God: that spring speaks of his tenderness and love, summer of his majesty, autumn of his bounty, and winter of his awful power: but still I know, that in his sanctuary I behold his glory yet more fully, and there I discover him to my heart's solace and delight. The true Christian *can* worship God in nature; but a man who has not learnt to worship God in his house, I am quite sure has not learnt to worship God anywhere. Natural religion is just a lie; men may say much about it, but it does not exist. Trace these Pharasaic members of the synagogue of Satan to their homes, and you will find that they make this natural religion an excuse for religion. It is an utter impossibility for any man to come to God in worship, save through Jesus Christ.

See, then, how my text shuts out of all acceptance with God all those who do not receive Christ to be the Son of God, the Mediator. Men sometimes say, "All are right; whether they are Jews or Gentiles, whatever they may be, they are all right." Now, be it understood once for all, that the religion of Christ gives no heed to such a fancy. It claims for itself alone the solitary throne in the kingdom of religious truth. It uses no chains and racks to obtain an unwilling profession of its faith; but the unbeliever is not flattered with promises of security, but, rather, he is threatened with a doom dreadful beyond all thought. There is not, in this book of God, one single sentence which could lead me to believe that there is a way to God for the Mahomedan, for the Jew, or for any one who does not come to him through Jesus Christ. The religion of Christ is exclusive in this. It declares, that other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. It declares that no man can come to God except through Jesus. All the charity of which some men talk is deceitful and valueless. We can have no hope for those who receive not Christ. We pity them, we love them, we pray for them, we plead for them that they may be brought to this; but we dare not deceive them, we dare not tell them that God will hear their prayers, if they will not come to him through Jesus Christ. No, we will be as tolerant as Jesus was, but Jesus himself said, "He that believeth not must be damned," and whatever thou mayest be,—Unitarian, Socinian, infidel, deist, theist, or what-not, however sincere thy prayers, God abhors and hates them if thou dost not offer them through Jesus Christ, the one way between the sinner and God.

II. Other men there are who, conselous that they cannot come to God as perfect beings in the crazy of worship, desire to approach him in the way of *penitence*. But mark, even in the way of penitence, no man can come to God except through Jesus Christ. Those tears in thine eyes, when Jesus the sun of righteousness shines on them, are as diamonds in the esteem of the God of mercy; but even thy tears, and sighs, and groans, cannot prevail with the heart of God, unless they be mingled with a humble faith in Jesus Christ his only Son. In vain thou weepest till thine eyes are red to blindness; in vain thou groanest till thy ribs burst with thine expanding heart of agony, in vain thou kneelest till thy knees are stiff with prayer: God hears thee not, he accepts thee not, until thou makest mention of Jesus the crucified, his Son, the Saviour of mankind. Oh! it is mournful to see how men try to approach God in any way but through Jesus Christ. You have the Romish church putting men to penance, in order that they may so come to God. It was but one day this week I went

into a Romish cathedral, and there, to my disgust and horror, I saw poor women on their knees, going entirely round the cathedral having as a penance to pray before a whole set of pictures that were exhibited upon the walls. Well, I thought, if this be acceptable to their God, I am sure it would not be to mine. To give these poor women the rheumatism, or something worse, in order that God might be pleased with them, is the most extraordinary way of going to work that I know of. What a God must theirs be, that is pleased with poor souls when they torture themselves. Behold the monk—if he would gratify his god, he must not wash himself; for their god is a god of filth, and according to their own confession, cleanliness is not acceptable to him. Again, he must fast—their god is a god of starvation; it is quite clear he is not our God,—for he is a God of bounty. The poor monk must flog himself: he must flagellate his poor back till the blood runs down in streams, their god delights in the blood of his creatures, evidently and nothing pleases him so much, according to their own confession, as for his creatures to torture themselves. Happily however, their god has nothing whatever to do with our God. Their god is an old Romish pagan demon that was cursed of old and is cursed now; but our God is a God who takes delight in the happiness of his creatures, who, if there be any merit anywhere, would sooner see it in our happiness than in our sorrow, although, mark you, there is no merit in either. When we come to God in penitence we must bring but one oblation, for there is but one way of offering acceptable penitence to God, and that is through Jesus Christ our Lord. We will imagine there is a man over yonder who is feeling that he has been guilty, but he desires to be forgiven. “Oh!” says he, “I know I am guilty; I feel that I deserve God’s wrath. Well, I will promise I will never be drunk again; I will not swear make a resolution that I will be better.” Ah! friend; ah! friend! you will never come to God in penitence that way. O man, that way—that way of works—is a way of death. The very first time thou putteth thy foot on it I can hear the low mutterings of the thunder-curse: “Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Go on with thy resolves; try to carry them out; thou shalt find that this road of thine will grow more difficult every day. The more thou dost the more thou wilt have to do; when thou hast climbed a hill, thou wilt see a mountain beyond, when thou hast forded a stream, thou wilt see a sea before thee, and no means of crossing it. The way to heaven through good works would be a very hard one, even if it were a possible one. Conscience is like the horse-leech—it always cries, “Give, give, give.” Conscience is never satisfied with the best works that we can do; it always wants more. But ah, I remind thee, man, that if thou goest on in that way of works, and seekest to be forgiven through it, thy destruction is as sure as if thou didst run in the way of sin. Mark thee, man, the Jews of old would not accept the righteousness of Christ, and they went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ, and hence they perished, and that without mercy. And so shall you. O turn from that way! God will not receive thee in it; turn from it! then. If you were perfect, and had never broken God’s law at all, then might you be saved by the law; but one sin breaks the law to shivers, and thou canst not mend the breach. Thou art lost if thou standest on the footing of works. Come away! then, come away! come to the cross of Christ! There is no way to heaven but by Jesus Christ; come! both from thy works and thy sins; look to him and live; look to him and see thy sins forgiven; look to him, and behold thy penitence accepted, and a gracious answer given.

III. There are other men who feel, “Well, we know Jesus must forgive our sins, it is through his sufferings that I must be pardoned; but,” say they, “we desire now to be *acceptable* to God all the days of our life; we will therefore endeavor to come to God in a way in which he shall accept us.” Many there are that light upon a way like this, “We will be very scrupulous,” say they, “in all

our transactions, exact in our dealings with men, and bountiful in our liberality to God; in this way shall we be accepted. Christ," say they, "shall be trusted to take away our sins but we will have the clothing of ourselves with a robe of righteousness; we will let Christ wash us, and wash our works too, if he pleases; but at least we will be the manufacturers of our own virtues and excellencies. God shall accept us through what we do; Jesus shall make up the deficiency he shall darn a hole or two that may occur in the garment, but nevertheless we will stick to the old cloth throughout and though we do hear that our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, yet we will have them washed, and wear them over again, rags though they be." Now, mark, my hearers, as when we come to God first we must bring nothing with us but the blood of Christ, so when we come to him afterwards, we must still bring nothing but the same offering. A guilty sinner, when he approaches God's throne, can never be pardoned, except by pleading the blood once shed by Christ, and the highest saint, the most eminent believer, can no more be accepted by God than the meanest sinner, unless he still pleads the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Arminian, despite his denial of it, has in his own mind, a notion that his acceptance with God in some measure depends upon his own actions. Although many Arminian divines say, that they do not believe this, yet they must nevertheless believe it; it lies at the very root and basis of their fallen doctrine. They do believe, that let the Christian fall into sin, God will cast him out of his family, and I say it follows as a necessary influence, that the acceptance of a Christian must on that theory, depend on good works; so that in coming to God he comes through his own good behavior, and not through what Jesus did. Now, mark, this is an egregious falsehood, and as damnable an error as if I were to preach that salvation was entirely by works. There is no part of the Christian's experience in which a Christian can deal with God otherwise than through Christ. At the beginning it is all through Christ; in the middle it is all through Christ; and in the end it must be the same. If it were possible for thee, my brother, to be clean rid of sin, yet thou couldst not come to God except through Christ. When thy faith shall grow into assurance, when the follies of thy life shall all be expunged, when thy character shall be saintly, when thy heart shall be perfectly sanctified, even then the means of access and the mode of acceptance of thy soul before God will remain unalterable and unchanged. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, the path for the sinner and the way for the saint. No road to God—even for the holiest man—no road to God's acceptance, but through Jesus, and through Jesus only.

Do we not each of us in ourselves at times an aptness to come to God in some other way than through Jesus Christ? "Now you have preached well," says Satan; "you have been successful in such-and-such a labor. Ah!" says the devil, "how liberal you have been in such-and-such a cause. Now go to God in prayer." And we go, and we pray with such assurance; we think we are sure to be heard. But perhaps without our knowing it, there is lurking at the bottom of our excellent fluency in prayer an evil thought that surely God will hear us, for we have been so diligent, and liberal. And on the other hand, when we have been committing sin, when conscience chides us, then we go to the throne, and we are half afraid, because we say God will not hear us. Is not that still pride? Why, were we ever better than we are now? Were we not always, and are we not now, as bad as ever we can be? In ourselves is there anything that can commend us to God? Is not the very fact that when in our good state we come boldly, and when in our low state we come timidly, proof that there is lurking in us a secret suspicion that we are to come to God by something that is in us? Oh! if we could but learn this truth and stand to it, that our acceptance with God depends upon nothing that we do or can do, nothing that we can think, or feel, or be, but depends wholly and entirely and solely upon what Jesus is, and what he has done, and what he has suffered, let us once get that

thought—and it is in the text—we shall then be able, by the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, to come to God at all times with boldness, knowing that we were so coming through Christ, and therefore we might always come boldly to the throne of grace.

Have I here to-day?—I am sure I have—some timid soul that is afraid to come to God through Christ? Ah! my dear brother, I know thy fear, and I can pity thee; but I know thy fear, and I can blame thee too. What! art thou afraid to come to God through Christ, and dost thou want some one to speak to Christ for thee? Oh! foolish heart! You do need a Mediator in coming to God, but you do not need any in coming to Christ. Go to him just as you are, without making yourself any better; go straight away, rags, and sin, and leprosy, and blotches, and sores, and all, straight away to him. Do not be afraid that the Father will reject you if you come alone through him. Let me lead you my poor timid brother to this way. Come with me. Do you see yon cross? Do you mark that glorious man dying on it in agonies that cannot be described? Do you not think that those sufferings are enough to expiate the wrath of God? Why, hear him! Will you not believe what he says?—“It is finished!” he cries ere he gives up the ghost. Now, if *Jesus* thought it finished, do *you* not think it so? If he himself thought that he had done enough, is not that enough for you that is enough for him? Come boldly, for Jesus smiles upon you. His blood is dropping; his heart is still flowing with the blood and water. Come! none ever were cast out; shalt thou be the first? Those arms that are nailed to the cross are wide open, as if they would show thee that they can receive the biggest of sinners. Those feet that are nailed to the cross are fastened there as if they meant to stop there, and wait to be gracious to thee. O see you his pierced side, it seems as if it said to thee, “My heart is not hard to reach. See there is a straight road to it opened by the Roman spear. Come, breathe thy sighs into my heart, and I will hear and answer.” Come, soul! Come to this way. How safe it is, for o’er it hangs the banner of Jehovah’s love; and on the ground is the bloodmark of the Saviour’s footsteps. This gory pathway to the throne of God, I now entreat thee to enter. Jesus made it; Jesus smoothed it; Jesus dyed it with his blood. The stain ran; all along a purple clue, to guide thee through the labyrinths of all thy doubts and fears. Come, come away poor soul! Come put thy trust alone in Jesus, and then, thou need’st not come to God the Father with trembling and with dismay. God help thee, timid one, God help thee. Thou hast no need to despond: Jesus saith he will cast out none that come to him by faith.

IV. I shall not keep you much longer, but I must now observe, that there are others who desire to come to God in *communion*. You will meet every now and then with a devout man who has but very imperfect notions of the gospel, and who, nevertheless, has a kind of reverence for the living God. He is an astronomer, and he will tell you that an undevout astronomer is mad; he says, that while his eyes look through the telescope glass upon the wondrous worlds that float in ether, he communes with God, marvels at his power, and admires his matchless benevolence and skill. The geologist, too, will tell you, that when digging into the deep foundations of the world and bringing out those old inhabitants, who in days of yore stalked through gigantic forests, he feels he can talk with God the Eternal One; that those grey hairs of an ancient world remind him of the Ancient of days, and the bones of a buried generation, all remind him of the Eternal One, who was before all things, and by whom all things consist. Now, these men are sincere; but do not imagine for an instant that their devotion is acceptable, or that their communion is true and real, unless in this they tincture and savor their communion with the knowledge, that Jesus Christ is the only way of access to God. Oh, soul, if thou wouldest walk with God, as Adam did in Eden, and it is quite possible; if thou wouldest walk with him as Enoch did, and that is quite possible, too; if thou wouldest see him

face to face, and talk to him as a man would talk with his friend, remember thou must be set in the cleft of the rock Christ Jesus, or else thou canst not do it. Once let a man stand in that cleft and see Jesus' blood, then he can commune with God in nature readily enough. Standing at the foot of the mountain he may see that hill like a wedge piercing the ebon darkness, and his soul may climb the summit and enter into the invisible; he may look upon that awful summit as upon an ambassador sent from earth to heaven; and his spirit may seem to rise on the mountain top, until it appears to grasp the hand of the Almighty One. But mark, the steep summit of fellowship cannot be climbed, except Jesus Christ lend himself to be the sacred ladder, and gives strength to the weary footsteps of our faith. He is the *way* to God; he is the *truth* to guide us; he is the *life* to enable us to run in the road. Without Christ there is no way to communion, no truth in communion, and no life in our pretended fellowship. Christian, take heed that thou never triest to commune with God except through Jesus Christ. Never try to commune with him even through the Holy Spirit, if thou forgettest Christ. The Holy Spirit acts the communion; but still Christ is the medium through which it flows. The Holy Spirit runs through Christ as through a channel. As water from the conduit runs through the pipe, so fellowship must run through Jesus Christ. There can be no coming of God to us, and no going of our soul to God, except through the highway of communion, Jesus Christ, the man and yet the God.

V. And lastly, to conclude: Who is there among us who does not desire to come to God in heaven? Lives there a man with soul so dead that he has no pantings for another and a better world? Is there a heart so seared that it never longs to be at rest—an eye so blind that it never looks into the hereafter, and a soul so stolid that it never leaps with exulting spirit, in the prospect of a world of joy and happiness? The wild untutored savage of the woods looks to another world, and when some beloved one is buried, he lights a fire upon the grave, to light the spirit through the dreary shades of death, that it may find its way to paradise; and then he sits upon the grave, when the fire is quenched, and days of the spirit that is gone, and hopes for it that it has gone to the kingdom of the blessed, to the land of the hereafter. Never is he content, unless he hopes that the spirit of his beloved one is gone to a better land. And shall it be imagined that any of us who are living in a Christian country are shutting our eyes to the future, and never think of looking beyond the grave there are many here—nay, all of us are longing for another and a better world. O world of woe, what wert thou, if thou wert not a stepping-stone to a world of bliss? O land of graves and shrouds, of pick-axe and of spade, what wert thou if we did not dive through thee into the land of light? O vale of tears, what wert thou, if it were not that thou art the pathway to the mountain of transfiguration? O valley of Baca, filled with tears of sorrow, till the pools thereof are overflowing! what wert thou, if thou didst not lead to the tabernacles of our God, the peaceful sanctuary in which we hope to dwell?

But there is no way to heaven, whatever our hopes may be, but through Christ. O spirit of man, there is no way to the gates of pearl but through the bleeding side of Jesus. These are the gates of paradise—these bleeding wounds. If thou wouldst find thy way to God's bright throne, find first thy way to Jesus' shameful cross; if thou wouldst know the way to happiness, tread in that path of misery which Jesus trod. What! attempt another way? Man, art thou mad enough to think that thou canst rend the posts, and bars, and gates of heaven from their perpetual places, and force thy way by thy created strength? The arm of God shall dash thee down to the nethermost pit. Or dost thou think to purchase with thy riches and thy gold a foothold in paradise? Fool! what is thy gold where streets are made of it, and where the gates are solid pearl—where the foundations are of jasper, and

the walls whereof are precious gems? And dost thou think to get there by thy merits? Ah! fool that thou art, by pride fell the angels, and by thy pride thou fallest. In thy talking of merit thou confessest that thou art Lucifer himself incarnate. Away with thee! Heaven is not for such as thou art. But dost thou say, "I will leave my wealth after I have gone. I will build an hospital, or feed the poor." Then let men pay thee. Thou hast wrought for thy nation, let them pay the debt; let them rear the stony pillar, and set thy effigy upon the top thereof. If thou hast wrought for thy country, let thy country pay thee what they owe to thee. But God, what does he owe to thee? Thou hast forgotten him, thou hast despised his Son, thou hast rejected his gospel. Be thou warrior, statesman, patriot—let men pay thee; God owes thee nothing, and all thou canst do will not bribe him to admit thee to his palace, if thou comest not in the right way through Jesus Christ, who lived and died, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of heaven at his girdle.

Come, now, ye that have nothing to bring, come to Christ this morning, ye perishing, ye guilty, and ye lost. God a ambassador stands before you, and as though Christ did woo you, he pleads with you to come to Jesus *now*. Ye that are under conviction of sin, and want salvation, believe on him now. In thine heart poor sinner, say—

“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.”

The invitation is freely given, the proclamation is openly made. My God is not a God of hatred and of anger; he is a God of love. He bids you who are thirsty, who are longing to see his face, he bids you now come; and he tells you, and he confirms the same with an oath—“As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Come now! “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.” O Spirit of God! draw sinners to Christ! O glorious One! do thou be pleased now to draw them to the Father, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mr. Fearing Comforted

A Sermon

(No. 246)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 3rd, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”—Matthew 14:31.

IT SEEMS AS if doubt were doomed to be the perpetual companion of faith. As dust attends the chariotwheels so do doubts naturally becloud faith. Some men of little faith are perpetually enshrouded with fears; their faith seems only strong enough to enable them to doubt. If they had no faith at all, then they would not doubt, but having that little, and but so little, they are perpetually involved in distressing surmises, suspicions, and fears. Others, who have attained to great strength and stability of faith, are nevertheless, at times, subjects of doubt. He who has a colossal faith will sometimes find that the clouds of fear float over the brow of his confidence. It is not possible, I suppose, so long as man is in this world, that he should be perfect in anything; and surely it seems to be quite impossible that he should be perfect in faith. Sometimes, indeed, the Lord purposely leaves his children, withdraws the divine inflowings of his grace, and permits them to begin to sink, in order that they may understand that faith is not their own work, but is at first the gift of God, and must always be maintained and kept alive in the heart by the fresh influence of the Holy Spirit. I take it that Peter was a man of great faith. When others doubted, Peter believed. He boldly avowed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, for which faith he received the Master's commendation, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” He was of faith so strong, that at Christ's command he could tread the billow and find it like glass beneath his feet, yet even he was permitted in this thing to fall. Faith forsook him, he looked at the winds and the waves, and began to sink, and the Lord said to him, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” As much as to say, “O Peter, thy great faith is my gift, and the greatness of it is my work. Think not that thou art the author of thine own faith; I will leave thee, and this great faith of thine shall speedily disappear, and like another who hath no faith, thou shalt believe the winds, and regard the waves, but shalt distrust thy Master's power, and therefore shalt thou sink.”

I think I shall be quite safe in concluding this morning, that there are some here who are full of doubting and fearing. Sure I am that all true Christians have their times of anxious questioning. The heart that hath never doubted has not yet learned to believe. As the farmers say, “The land that will not grow a thistle, will not grow wheat;” and the heart that cannot produce a doubt has not yet understood the meaning of believing. He that never doubted of his state—he may, perhaps he may, too late. Yes, there may be timid ones here, those who are always of little faith, and there may be also great hearts, those who are valiant for truth, who are now enduring seasons of despondency and hours of darkness of heart.

Now in endeavoring to comfort you this morning, I would remark that the text goes upon a very wise principle. If a man believes in anything it is always proper to put to him the question, “Why do you believe? What evidence have you that what you believe is certainly correct?” We believe

on evidence. Now the most foolish part of many men's doubts, is, that they do not doubt on evidence. If you should put to them the question, "Why do you doubt?"—they would not be able fairly to answer. Yet mark, if men's doubts be painful, the wisest way to remove them is by simply seeing whether they have a firm basis. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" If you believe a thing you want evidence, and before you doubt a thing you ought to have evidence too. To believe without evidence is to be credulous, and to doubt without evidence is to be foolish. We should have ground for our doubts as well as a basis for our faith. The text, therefore, goes on a most excellent principle, and it deals with all doubting minds by asking them this question, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

I shall endeavor to exhort you on the same plan this morning. I shall divide only sermon into two parts. First, I shall address myself to those of you who are in great trouble with regard to *temporal circumstances*, you are God's people, but you are sorely tried, and you have begun to doubt. I shall then deal with you upon *spiritual matters*—there are some here who are God's true, quickened, and living people, but they are doubting—to them also I shall put the same question, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?"

I. First, then, in TEMPORAL CIRCUMSTANCES, God has not made for his people a smooth path to heaven. Before they are crowned they must fight; before they can enter the celestial city they must fulfill a weary pilgrimage. Religion helps us in trouble, but it does not suffer us to escape from it. It is through much tribulation that we inherit the kingdom. Now the Christian when he is full of faith passes through affliction with a song in his mouth; he would enter the fiery furnace itself, fearless of the devouring flame, or with Jonah he would descend into the great deeps, unalarmed at the hungry sea. As long as faith maintains its hold, fear is a stranger; but at times, during sundry great and sore troubles, the Christian begins to fear that surely at last he shall be overcome, and shall be left to himself to die and perish in despair.

Now, what is the reason why you doubt? I must come to the plan of the text and put the great question, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Here it will be proper for us to enquire: Why did Simon Peter doubt? He doubted for two reasons. First, because he looked too much to second causes and secondly, because he looked too little at the first cause. The answer will suit you also, my trembling brother. This is the reason why you doubt, because you are looking too much to the things that are seen, and too little to your unseen Friend who is behind your troubles and who shall come forth for your deliverance. See poor Peter in the ship—his Master bids him come; in a moment he casts himself into the sea, and to his own surprise he finds himself walking the billows. He looks down, and actually it is the fact; his foot is upon a crested wave, and yet he stands erect; he treads again, and yet his footing is secure. "Oh!" thinks Peter, "this is marvellous." He begins to wonder within his spirit what manner of man *he* must be who has enabled him thus to tread the treacherous deep; but just then, there comes howling across the sea a terrible blast of wind; it whistles in the ear of Peter, and he says within himself, "Ah! here comes an enormous billow driven forward by the blast now, surely, I must, I shall be overwhelmed." No sooner does the thought enter his heart than down he goes; and the waves begin to enclose him. So long as he shut his eye to the billow, and to the blast, and kept it only open to the Lord who stood there before him, he did not sink; but the moment he shut his eye on Christ, and looked at the stormy wind and treacherous deep, down he went. He might have traversed the leagues of the Atlantic, he might have crossed the broad Pacific, if he could but have kept his eye on Christ, and ne'er a billow would have yielded to his tread, but he might have been drowned in a very brook if he began to look at second causes,

and to forget the Great Head and Master of the Universe who had bidden him walk the sea. I say, the very reason of Peter's doubt was, that he looked at second causes and not at the first cause. Now, that is the reason why you doubt. Let me just probe you now for a while. You are in despondency about temporal affairs: what is the reason why you are in trouble? "Because," say you, "I never was in such a condition before in my life. Wave upon wave of trouble comes upon me. I have lost one friend and then another. It seems as if business had altogether run away from me. Once I had a flood-tide, and now it is an ebb, and my poor ship grates upon the gravel, and I find she has not water enough to float her—what will become of me? And, oh! sir, my enemies have conspired against me in every way to cut me up and destroy me; opposition upon opposition threatens me. My shop must be closed; bankruptcy stares me in the face, and I know not what is to become of me." Or else your troubles take another shape, and you feel that you are called to some eminently arduous service for your Lord, and your strength is utterly insignificant compared with the labor before you. If you had great faith it would be as much as you could do to accomplish it; but with your poor little faith you are completely beaten. You cannot see how you can accomplish the matter at all. Now, what is all this but simply looking at second causes? You are looking at your trouble, not at the God who sent your trouble; you are looking at yourselves, not at the God who dwells within you, and who has promised to sustain you. O soul! it were enough to make the mightiest heart doubt, if it should look only at things that are seen. He that is nearest to the kingdom of heaven would have cause to droop and die if he had nothing to look at but that which eye can see and ear can hear. What wonder then if thou art disconsolate, when thou hast begun to look at the things which always must be enemies to faith?

But I would remind you that you have forgotten to look to Christ since you have been in this trouble. Let me ask you, have you not thought less of Christ than you ever did? I will not suppose that you have neglected prayer, or have left your Bible unread; but still, have you had any of those sweet thoughts of Christ which once you had? Have you been able to take all your troubles to him and say—"Lord, thou knowest all things; I trust all in thy hands?" Let me ask you, have you considered that Christ is omnipotent, and therefore able to deliver you; that he is faithful, and must deliver you, because he has promised to do so? Have you not kept your eye on his rod, and not on his hand? Have you not looked rather to the crook that smote you, than to the heart that moved that crook? Oh, recollect, that you can never find joy and peace while you are looking at the things that are seen, the second causes of your trouble; your only hope, your only refuge and joy must be to look to him who dwells within the veil. Peter sunk when he looked to outward providences, so must you. He would never have ceased to walk the wave, never would he have begun to sink, if he had looked alone to Christ, nor will you if you will look alone to him.

And here let me now begin to argue with such of you as are the people of God, who are in sore trouble lest Christ should leave you to sink. Let me forbid your fears by a few words of consolation. You are now in Peter's condition; you are like Peter; *you are Christ's servant*. Christ is a good master. You have never heard that he suffered one of his servants to be drowned when going on his errands. Will he not take care of his own? Shall it be said at last that one of Christ's disciples perished while he was in obedience to Christ. I say he were a bad master if he should send you on an errand that would involve your destruction. Peter, when he was in the water, was where his master had called him to be, and you in your trouble now, are not only Christ's servant, but you are where Christ has chosen to put you. Your afflictions, remember, come neither from the east nor from the west, neither doth your trouble grow out of the ground. All your suffering is sent upon

you by your God. The medicine which you now drink is compounded in heaven. Every grain of this bitterness which now fills your mouth was measured by the heavenly physician. There is not an ounce more trouble in your cup, than God chose to put there. Your burden was weighed by God before you were called to bear it. The Lord who gave you the mercy has taken it away; the same God who has blessed you with joy is he that hath now ploughed you with grief. You are where God put you. Ask yourself this question then:—Can it be possible that Christ would put his own servant into a perilous condition and then leave him there? I have heard of fiends, in fables, tempting men into the sea to drown them; but is Christ a syren? Will he entice his people on to the rocks? Will he tempt them into a place where he shall destroy them? God forbid. If Christ calls thee into the fire, he will bring thee out of it; and if he bids thee walk the sea, he will enable thee to tread it in safety. Doubt not, soul; if thou hadst come there of thyself, then thou mightest fear, but since Christ put thee there, he will bring thee out again. Let this be the pillar of thy confidence—thou art his servant, he wilt not leave thee; thou art where he put thee, he cannot suffer thee to perish. Look away, then, from the trouble that surrounds thee, to thy Master, and to his hand that hath planned all these things.

Remember too, who it is that hath thee where thou art. It is no harsh tyrant who has led thee into trouble. It is no austere unloving heart who hath bidden thee pass through this difficulty to gratify a capricious whim. Ah, no, he who troubles thee is *Christ*. Remember his bleeding hand; and canst thou think that the hand which dropped with gore can ever hang down when it should be stretched for thy deliverance? Think of the eye that wept over thee on the cross; and can the eye that wept for thee be blind when thou art in grief? Think of the heart that was opened for thee; and shall the heart that did bleed its life away to rescue thee from death, be hard and stolid when thou art overwhelmed in sorrow? It is Christ, that stands on yonder billow in the midst of the tempest with thee. He is suffering as well as thou art. Peter is not the only one walking on the sea; his master is there with him too. And so is Jesus with thee to-day, with thee in thy troubles, suffering *with* thee as he suffered *for* thee. Shall he leave thee, he that bought thee, he who is married to thee, he that hath led thee thus far, hath succoured thee hitherto he who loves thee better than he loves himself, shall he forsake thee? O turn thine eyes from the rough billow, listen no longer to the howling tempest, turn thine eyes to him thy loving Lord, thy faithful friend, and fix thy trust on him, who even now in the midst of the tempest, cries, “It is I, be not afraid.”

One other reflection will I offer to such of you as are now in sore trouble on account of temporal matters, and it is this—*Christ has helped you hitherto*. Should not this console you? Ah, Peter, why couldest thou fear that thou shouldest sink? It was miracle enough that thou didst not sink at first. What power is it that hath held thee up till now? Certainly not thine own. Thou hadst fallen at once to the bottom of the sea, O man, if God had not been thy helper; if Jesus had not made thee buoyant, Peter, thou wouldest soon have been a floating carcass. He who helped thee then to walk so long as thou couldest walk, surely he is able to help thee all the way until he shall grasp thy hand in Paradise to glorify thee with himself. Let any Christian look back to his past life, and he will be astonished that he is what he is and where he is. The whole Christian life is a series of miracles, wonders linked into wonders, in one perpetual chain. Marvel, believer, that thou hast been upheld till now; and cannot he that hath kept thee to this day preserve thee to the end? What is yon roaring wave that threatens to overwhelm thee—what is it? why thou hast endured greater waves than these in the past. What is yon howling blast? Why, he has saved thee when the wind was howling worse than that. He that helped thee in six troubles will not forsake thee in this. He who hath delivered

thee out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will not, he cannot forsake thee now.

In all this, I have labored to turn your eyes from what you are seeing to that which you cannot see, but in which you must believe. Oh! if I might but be successful, though feeble my words, yet mighty should be the consolation which should flow therefrom.

A minister of Christ, who was always in the habit of visiting those whom he knew to be eminent for piety, in order that he might learn from them, called upon an aged Christian who had been distinguished for his holiness. To his great surprise, however, when he sat down by his bedside, the erred man said, "Ah! I have lost my way. I did think at one time that I was a child of God, now I find that I have been a stumbling-block to others; for these forty years I have deceived the church and deceived myself, and now I discover that I am a lost soul." The minister very wisely said to him, "Ah! then I suppose you like the song of the drunkard and you are very fond of the amusements of the world and delight in profanity and sin?" "Ah! no," said he, "I cannot bear them, I could not endure to sin against God." "O then," said the minister, "then it is not at all likely that God will lock you up in hell with men that you cannot bear here. If now you hate sin, depend on it God will not shut you up for ever with sinners. But, my brother," said the minister "tell me what has brought you into such a distressed state of mind?" "O sir," said he, "it was looking away from the God of providence, to myself I had managed to save about one hundred pounds, and I have been lying here ill now this last six months, and I was thinking that my one hundred pounds would soon be spent, and then what should I do. I think I shall have to go to the workhouse, I have no friend to take care of me, and I have been thinking about that one hundred pounds of mine. I knew it would soon be gone, and then, then, how could the Lord provide for me. I never had either doubt or fear till I began to think about temporal matters. The time was when I could leave all that with God. If I had not had one hundred pounds, I should have felt quite sure he would provide for me; but I begin to think now that I cannot provide for myself. The moment I think of that, my heart is darkened." The minister then led him away from all trust in an arm of flesh, and told him his dependence for bread and water was not on his one hundred pounds, but on the God who is the possessor of heaven and earth—that as for his bread being given him and his water being sure God would take care of that, for in so doing he would only be fulfilling his promise. The poor man was enabled in the matter of providence to cast himself entirely upon God, and then his doubts and fears subsided, and once more he began to walk the sea of trouble, and did not sink. O believer, if thou takest thy business into thine own hands, thou wilt soon be in trouble. The old Puritan said, "He that carves for himself will soon cut his fingers," and I believe it. There never was a man who began to take his own matters out of God's hand that was not glad enough to take them back again. He that runs before the cloud runs a fool's errand. If we leave all our matters, temporal as well as spiritual, in the hand of God, we shall lack no good thing, and what is better still, we shall have no care, no trouble, no thought; we shall cast all our burden upon him for he careth for us. There is no need for two to care, for God to care and the creature too. If the Creator cares for us, then the creature may sing all day long with joy and gladness:—

"Mortals cease from toil and sorrow,
God provideth for the morrow."

II. But now, in the second part of the discourse, I have to speak of SPIRITUAL THINGS. To the Christian, these are the causes of more trouble than all his temporal trials. In the matters of the

soul and of eternity many doubts will arise. I shall, however, divide them into two sorts—doubts of our present acceptance, and doubts of our final perseverance.

Many there are of God's people who are much vexed and troubled with doubts about their present acceptance. "Oh," say they "there was a time when I knew I was a child of God; I was sure that I was Christ's, my heart would fly up to heaven at a word; I looked to Christ hanging on the cross, I fixed all my trust on him, and a sweet, calm, and blessed repose filled my spirit.

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

And now," saith this doubting one, "now I am afraid I never knew the Lord; I think that I have deceived myself, and that I have been a hypocrite. Oh that I could but know that I am Christ's, I would give all I had in the world, if he would but let me know that he is my beloved, and that I am his." Now, soul, I will deal with thee as I have been just now treating of Peter. Thy doubts arise from looking to second causes, and not to Christ. Let us see if this is not the truth. Why do you doubt? Your answer is, "I doubt, because I feel my sin so much. Oh, what sins have I committed! When first I came to Christ I *thought* I was the chief of sinners; but now I *know* I am. Day after day I have added to my guilt; and since my pretended conversion," says this doubting one, "I have been a bigger sinner than ever I was before. I have sinned against light and against knowledge, against grace, and mercy, and favor. O never was there such a sinner under God's heaven out of hell as I am." But, soul, is not this looking to second causes? It is true, thou art the chief of sinners; take that for granted, let us not dispute it. Thy sins are as evil as thou sayest they are, and a great deal more so. Depend on it, thou art worse than thou thinkest thyself to be. Thou thinkest thou art bad enough, but thou art not so bad in thine own estimation as thou really art. Thy sins seem to thee to be like roaring billows, but in God's sight they are like towering mountains without summit. Thou seemest to thyself to be black—black as the tents of Kedar; in God's eyes thou art blacker still. Set that down, to begin with, that the waves are big, and that the winds are howling, I will not dispute that. I ask thee, what hast thou to do with that? Does not the Word of God command thee to look to Christ. Great as thy sins are, Christ is greater than they all. They are black; but his blood can wash thee whiter than snow. I know thy sins deserve damnation; but Christ's merits deserve salvation. It is true, the pit of hell is thy lawful portion, but heaven itself is thy gracious portion. What! is Christ less powerful than thy sin? That cannot be! To suppose *that* were that to make the creature mightier than the Creator. What! is thy guilt more prevalent with God than Christ's righteousness? Canst thou think so little of Christ as to imagine that thy sins can overwhelm and conquer him? O man, thy sins are like mountains; but Christ's love is like Noah's flood; it prevaileth twenty cubits, and the tops of the mountains are covered. It is looking at sin and not looking to the Saviour that has made thee doubt. Thou art looking to the second cause, and not to him who is greater than all.

"Nay, but," you reply, "it is not my sin, sir, that grieves me; it is this: I feel so hardened, I do not feel my sin as I ought. Oh if I could but weep as some weep! If I could but pray as some pray! Then I think I could be saved. If I could feel some of the terrors that good men have felt, then I think I could believe. But I feel none of these things. My heart seems like a rock of ice, hard as granite, and as cold as an iceberg. It will not melt. You may preach, but it is not affected; I may pray, but my heart seems dumb, I may read even the story of Christ's death, and yet my soul is not

moved by it. Oh surely I cannot be saved!" Ah this is *looking to second causes*, again! Hast thou forgotten that Word which saith, "God is greater than our hearts?" Hast thou forgotten that? O child of God! shame on thee that thou dost look for comfort where comfort never can be found. Look to thyself for peace! Why, there ne'er can be any in this land of war. Look to thine own heart for joy! There can be none there, in this barren wilderness of sin. Turn, turn thine eye to Christ: he can cleanse thine heart, he can create life, and light, and truth in the inward parts; he can wash thee till thou shalt be whiter than snow, and cleanse thy soul and quicken it, and make it live, and feel, and move, so that it shall hear his simplest words, and obey his whispered mandate. O look not now at the second cause; look thou at the great first cause; otherwise I shall put to thee again the question, "O thou of little faith, *wherefore* didst thou doubt?"

"Still," says another, "I could believe, notwithstanding my sin and my hardness of heart; but, do you know, that of late I have lost communion with Christ to such an extent that I cannot help thinking that I must be a cast-away. Oh! sir, there were times when Christ used to visit me, and bring me such sweet love-tokens. I was like the little ewe lamb in the parable; I did drink out of his cup, and feed from his table, and lie in his bosom; often did he take me to his banqueting-house, his banner over me was love. What feastings I then had! I would bask in the sunlight of his countenance. It was summer with my soul. But now it is winter, and the sun is gone, and the banqueting-house is closed. No fruits are on the table; no wines are in the bottles of the promise; I come to the sanctuary, but I find no comfort; I turn to the Bible, but I find no solace; I fall on my knees, but even the stream of prayer seems to be a dry brook. Ah! soul, but art thou not still looking to second causes? These are the most precious of all secondary things, but yet thou must not look to them, but to Christ. Remember, it is not thy communing that saves thee, but Christ's dying; it is not Christ's comfortable visit to thy soul, that ensures thy salvation; it is Christ's own visit to the house of mourning, and to the garden of Gethsemane. I would have thee keep thy comforts as long as thou canst; but when they die, believe on thy God still. Jonah had a gourd once, and when that gourd died he began to mourn. Well might some one have said to him, "Jonah! thou hast lost thy gourd, but thou hast not lost thy God." And so might we say to you: you have not lost his love; you have lost the light of his countenance, but you have not lost the love of his heart; you have lost his sweet and gracious communion, but he is the same still, and he would have thee believe his faithfulness and trust him in the dark and rely upon him in the stormy wind and tempest. Look to none of these outward things, but look alone to Christ—Christ bleeding, Christ dying Christ dead, Christ buried, Christ risen, Christ ascended, Christ interceding. This is the thing thou art to look to—Christ, and him only. And looking there, thou shalt be comforted. But look to aught else, and thou shalt begin to sink; like Peter, the waves shall fail thee, and thou shalt have to cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

But, again, to conclude: others of God's people are afraid that they shall never be able to persevere and hold out to the end. "Oh!" says one, "I know I shall yet fall away and perish, for look!—look what an evil heart of unbelief I have; I cannot live one day without sin; my heart is so treacherous, it is like a bomb-shell; let but a spark of temptation fall upon it and it will blow up to my eternal destruction. With such a tinder-box heart as I have, how can I hope to escape, while I walk in the midst of a shower of sparks." "Oh!" saith one, "I feel my nature to be so utterly vile and depraved that I cannot hope to persevere. If I hold on a week or a month it will be a great work; but to hold on all my life until I die—oh! this is impossible." Looking to second causes again, are you not? Will you please to remember that if you look to creature strength it is utterly impossible

that you should persevere in grace, even for ten minutes, much less for ten years! If your perseverance depends upon yourself you are a lost man. You may write that down for a certainty. If you have one jot or one tittle to do with your own perseverance in divine grace you will never see God's face at last; your grace will die out; your life will be extinguished, and you must perish, if your salvation depends upon yourself. But remember, you have already been kept these months and these years: what has done that? Why, divine grace; and the divine grace that has held you on for one year can hold you on for a century, nay, for an eternity, if it were necessary. He that has begun can carry on and must carry on too, otherwise he were false to his promise and would deny himself. "Ah! but," you say, "sir, I cannot tell with what temptations I am surrounded; I am in a workshop, where everybody laughs at me; I am called nicknames because I follow the cause of Christ. I have been able hitherto to put up with their rebukes and their jests; but now they are adopting another plan; they try to tempt me away from the house of God, and entice me to the theater, and to worldly amusements, and I feel that, placed as I am, I never can hold on. As well might a spark hope to live in the midst of an ocean as for grace to live in my heart." Ah! but, soul, who has made it to live hitherto? What is it that hath helped thee up till now to say, "Nay," to every temptation? Why, the Lord thy Redeemer. Thou couldst not have done it so long, if it had not been for him; and he that hath helped thee to stand so long will never put thee to shame. Why, if thou be a child of God, and thou shouldst fall away and perish, what dishonor would be brought on Christ! "Aha!" the devil would say, "here is a child of God, and God has turned him out of his family, and I have got him in hell at last. Is this what God doth with his children—loves them one day, and hates them the next—tells them he forgives them, and yet punishes them—accepts them in Christ, and yet sends them into hell?" Can that be? Shall it be? Never: not while God is God. "Aha!" again, says Satan, "believers have eternal life given to them. Here is one that had eternal life, and this eternal life has died out. It was not eternal. The promise was a lie. It was temporary life; it was not eternal life. Aha!" says he, "I have found a flaw in Christ's promise; he gave them only temporary life, and called it eternal." And again, the arch-fiend would say, if it were possible for one child of God to perish: "Aha! I have one of the jewels of Christ's crown here;" and he would hold it up, and defy Christ to his very face, and laugh him to scorn. "This is a jewel that thou didst purchase with thine own blood. Here is one that thou didst come into the world to save and yet thou couldst not save him. Thou didst buy him, and pay for him, and yet I have got him, he was a jewel of thy crown, and yet here he is, in the hand of the black prince, thine enemy. Aha! king with a damaged crown! thou hast lost one of thy jewels." Can it be so? No, never, and therefore every one that believeth is as sure of heaven as if he were there. If thou casteth thyself simply on Christ, nor death, nor hell, shall ever destroy thee. Remember what good old Mr. Berridge said, when he was met by a friend one morning, "How do you do, Mr. Berridge?" "Pretty well, I thank you," said he, "and as sure of heaven as if I were there; for I have a solid confidence in Christ." What a happy man such a man must be, who knows and feels that to be true! And yet, if you do not feel it, if you are the children of God, I put to you this question, "Wherefore dost thou doubt?" Is there not good reason to believe. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" If thou hast believed in Christ, saved thou art, and saved thou shalt be, if thou hast committed thyself to his hands: "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

"Yes." says one. "this is not the fear that troubles me; my only doubt is whether I am a child of God or not." I finish, therefore, by going over the old ground. Soul, if thou wouldst know whether thou art a child of God, look not to thyself, but look to Christ. Ye who are here to-day, who desire

to be saved, but yet fear you never can be, never look to yourselves for any ground of acceptance before God. Not self, but Jesus; not heart, but Christ; not man, but man's Creator. O sinner! think not that thou art to bring anything to Christ to recommend thee. Come to him just as thou art. He wants no good works of thine—no good feelings either. Come, just as thou art. All that thou canst want to fit thee for heaven, he has bought for thee, and he will give thee; all these freely thou shalt have for the asking. Only come, and he will not cast thee away. But do you say, "Oh, I cannot believe that Christ is able to save such a sinner as I am." "I reply, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" He has already saved sinners as great as thou art; only try him, only try him.

"Venture on him, venture wholly;

Let no other trust intrude."

Try him, try him; and if you find him false, then tell it everywhere that Christ was untrue. But that shall never be. Go to him; tell him you are a wretched undone soul, without his sovereign grace; ask him to have mercy on you. Tell him you are determined, if you do perish, that you will perish at the foot of his cross. Go and cling to him, as he hangs bleeding there; look him in the face, and say, "Jesus, I have no other refuge; if thou spurn me, I am lost; but I will never go from thee; I will clasp thee in life, and clasp thee in death, as the only rock of my soul's salvation "Depend upon it, you shall not be sent empty away; you must, you shall be accepted, if you will simply believe. Oh, may God enable you, by the divine influence of his Holy Spirit, to believe; and then, shall we not have to put the question, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" I pray God now apply these words to your comfort. They have been very simple, and very homely words; but nevertheless, they will suit simple, homely hearts. If God shall bless them, to him be the glory!

The Best of Masters

A Sermon

(No. 247)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 10th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; *not as the world giveth, I give unto you.*”—John 14:27.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN is peculiarly the history of Jesus, the Son of God. Matthew deals with Jesus as the Prince of the house of David; Mark treats of him as the Servant of servants; and Luke views him as the Son of Man; but John, with eagle eye, looks beyond all the clouds of his humanity, and seeing the clear shining of his divinity, writes of him especially as the Son of God, the Word, that in the beginning was with God and was God. It seems but right, then, that since Jesus came from heaven, he should sometimes put both himself and his cause, in contrast with that which is of the earth, earthy. You will find through several chapters wherein our Saviour is addressing his disciples, he continually contrasts himself, his gifts, and his love, with those of the world. He came from heaven that he might fight and wrestle with an evil and a wicked world; that he might rescue his people from it; that he might cleanse the world, and, at last, might present the earth itself to himself, to be the new heaven and the new earth, wherein righteousness should dwell. I say, it seems but right, that in a gospel which particularly views Christ as of heavenly origin, and as very God of very God, that there should frequently be a contrast between Christ and the world, between the kingdom which is from heaven, and the kingdoms of this earth. Now, our text presents us with one contrast between Christ and the world: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” He gives after a diviner fashion than the world can ever give, even when its hand is most laden with its gifts.

Now, I shall take my text this morning, and endeavor to talk of it thus—first, viewing it with regard to *the peace which Christ gives*: he does not give peace as the world gives it. Secondly, I shall take a larger view of the subject, and look upon *all the gifts of Christ*, and say that, “not as the world giveth, doth he bestow his mercies on us;” and then close with a *practical inference* from the whole subject.

I. First of all, IN THE MATTER OF PEACE, Christ gives us peace, but not as the world gives it. For, in the first place, the world gives peace *in a complimentary style*. It was usual among the Orientals, for the wayfarer to say to the person whom he met, “Peace be to you;” and generally, when a house was entered, the benediction of peace was bestowed by every person who stepped across the threshold. These were often but vain and empty expressions of compliment. Those very utterances might proceed from the lips of an enemy. “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.” It is the same with the world at this day. Everyone salutes us in writing with a “Dear sir,” or a “My dear sir,” and concludes “Yours very truly,” and “Yours sincerely.” We call all “friends,” and if we meet but casually we express the utmost anxiety with regard to one another’s health, and we carefully enquire after each other’s families; when perhaps we shall no sooner have passed by the person

than we shall forget his existence, and certainly shall entertain no anxious thoughts with regard to his welfare, nor any loving remembrance of him. The world gives very largely when it gives compliments. Oh, what blessings would descend upon all our heads, if the blessings uttered could be blessings bestowed. Even when the “Good bye” is given, which translated means, “God be with you”—if that could be but true, and if God could be with us, in answer to that prayer, so little understood, how rich might we be! But alas! the way of the world is, “Be thou warmed and be thou filled;” but it hath not that which should warm, nor that which should fill. It is a world of words; high-sounding, empty, all-deceiving words. Now, not so, does Christ give. If he says “Peace be with you,” his benediction is most true and full of sweet sincerity. He left his own peace in heaven, that he might give the peace which he enjoyed with his Father, to us in this world of sorrow, for thus he puts it, “My peace I give unto you.” Christ, when he blesses, blesses not in word only, but in deed. The lips of truth cannot promise more than the hands of love will surely give. He gives not in compliment.

Furthermore, even when the world’s wishes of peace are sincere, what are they but *mere wishes*. If I am met by my most sincere friend, and he wishes to give a benediction, he cannot bestow one. ‘Tis God’s to bless his people with peace. We may bless with the wish but not with the deed. It may be our desire that every mercy should cluster round the head of our friend—that his pillow should be smooth, that his path should be easy, that his heart should be happy, that his end may be peace; but we must leave it with God to fulfill our prayers. If our power were equal to our will, how richly would we bless our friends with the priceless jewel of peace. But Christ says, “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” His wishes for us shall be accomplished, and he himself shall work them out. Does he wish for us that we may be sanctified? Lo! he will sanctify us, and present us without spot, or wrinkle, or any such things. Is it his will that we should be with him where he is? It shall be done, and we shall behold his glory and we shall share in it. There was ne’er a wish in Christ’s heart with regard to his people that merely ended in a wish. The wish is but the bow string; the blessing is the arrow shot from it. Christ hath not an empty bow, but his quiver is filled with arrows, and every time he wisheth, he fitteth a blessing on the string and sendeth it to us. Oh rest assured that not, as the world giveth, with the empty wish, the deceitful brook, the empty well doth Christ give to us, but he gives a fullness and a reality in all that he bestows.

Yet, furthermore, I may remark that, with regard to peace, the world gives only peace in prospect. There is not a man alive who is not hoping for better times; even boys believe that better times are coming—times of rest and peace. The man who is just beginning in business expects that he shall take his rest and be much at ease, when he shall have succeeded in establishing a connection; or if he finds that, as business increases, cares multiply, he hopes that, in a little time, the whole matter will become more steady, and that by the employment of honest persons, much of the care may be taken from him. And that time comes; but he finds that, even then, there are fresh cares which have arisen as the others have died out. He then looks forward to the time when, in his green old age, he shall retire to some country retreat, and there spend the rest of his days in peace. For the most part that is but a vision, and grey age in its retirement hath its troubles still; still, when men grow old, trouble is as young as ever, and man finds just as much to prick and wound in the thorns of earth as when for the first time he trod its soil. We are all *intending and beginning* to be peaceful; we are all *going* to be happy by-and-bye. We have all made up our minds that soon we will have done with desiring more, and then we will make our rest. This is the miraculous mistake of man,—that he is always beginning to live; but he never does live; he always intends to be satisfied, but he never

is; he always means to sit down in content, but that period never arrives. He has always something to vex him, but still hopes the day shall come when he shall be vexed no more. Now, not as the world giveth gives Christ to us. The world puts before us a mirage in the desert. We see before us what we fancy to be springs of water, and spreading palm trees; and we rush forward, but it is not there. It is only a few rods ahead, and on we go, full wearily and foot-sore, and now it is a little further on; still we hurry on, but as we progress the vision flies before us, but we never reach it. Not thus doth Christ bless. He gives, and gives now; he gives in present foretaste, and will give assuredly in the world which is to come. Yes, even now, the true Christian can say he has peace in Christ. Oh! there are some of us who know what it is to be so content and happy when our thoughts are exercised upon our standing in Christ, that we could say we have not a wish beyond; we could sit still for ever, and rest in him. Verily, we can testify that they who have believed do enter into rest. We have seen the billows roar, we have marked the storm gathering, we have seen the black clouds big with tempest, gathering over-head; and we have been enabled to defy all these things, and to find rest in Christ, notwithstanding. Nay, and when the clouds have emptied out their horrors, when the lightnings have scathed the brow of darkness, and the thunder has rolled, tremendous, through the sky, we have known what it is, even then, to rest in the bosom of Christ, as a babe upon the breast of its mother. We have had a quiet and a perfect rest while the world has been in arms abroad. Christ gives a real peace, not a something that we have to hunt after for to-morrow, but a thing that we have now. And the true believer can say that, when he is enabled to see himself in Christ, he has all he wants; he can rest on beds of spices, feed among the lillies of satisfaction, and neither ask nor wish for anything beyond. "Peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth. give I unto you."

Yet again, I remark once more, that all the peace which the world ever did give to any man, was a delusion. I know some who possess the world's peace; I would to God that peace were broken. Some of you are content with yourselves; you are good enough you say, or, if not good enough, 'tis easy to amend. You fold your arms, and you say, "Why make myself miserable about religion? Why trouble myself about the interests of another world?" Ah man! I would to God thou couldst be made wretched—that thou couldst be made miserable, for mark, me, thy sleep is the sleep of death. It is one of the devil's great devices for destroying souls, to satisfy men—to give them the drug of indifference, the laudanum of procrastination, and so to stultify and stupify them, that they go on from day to day, careless and reckless, till in hell they lift up their eyes. Why, if you are concerned about your souls there is hope for you; the way to peace lies through distress. You must first be agitated before you can be pacified. But, if you now say, "peace, peace," I tell you there is no peace; and if you now say, "be quiet, be still, hush!" I warn you, that all the quiet of which you boast is the hush before the hurricane, when the world seems as if it stood still in terror, when the birds droop their wings upon the trees, and cease their notes, when the very lion hides himself in the thicket, and when he roars no more, but is still, waiting for the rushing wings of tempest. Here is a picture of your vaunted peace! Your calm is but a prelude of an eternal storm. The sunshine of to-day is but the index of the awful shower of to-morrow, a shower of red rain of vengeance, and of hail mingled with fire. Oh, the peace the world gives is delusive. They that rest there, rest upon a bed of death; but the peace which Christ gives is no delusion. When the Christian can sit down and say "I have nothing to fear. I have nothing to trouble me—nothing to tremble at, neither for this world, nor for the next," he is not saying one word more than he has good ground for saying; nay he is not going so far as he might go. He may say

“Now let earth’s old pillars shake,
 And all the wheels of nature break,
 My stedfast soul shall fear no more,
 Than solid rocks when billows roar.”

That peace has no pretense in it. It is not bombast; it is a reality, Profound though it be, it is not one whit more profound than it is warranted to be. The believer rests upon a solid rock, and all the waves of trouble can never make that rock give way, or shake the foundation of his peace. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”

II. Now having touched upon the first point, I come to the second IN THE MATTER OF GIVING. Take a broad view of it. In whatever the world gives, Christ does not give after the same fashion.

In the first place, the world gives *scantily*. Even the world’s best friends have had cause to complain of its scurvy treatment. In reading the biographies of mighty men whom the world honors, you will be soon convinced that the world is a most ungrateful friend. If you should devote your whole life to serve the world, and make it happy, think not the world would ever return you so much as a dolt. Robert Burns is an instance of the world’s fine gratitude. There was the world’s poet, he sung the roaring tankards foaming; he sang the loves of women and the joys of lust, the world admires him, but what did the world do for him? He might drag along his whole life in almost poverty. When the time comes for Robert Burns to be honored, (which was all too late for a buried man,) how did they honor him? He had poor relatives; look to the subscription list, and see how magnificent the donations they received! They honored him with libations of whiskey which they drank themselves; that was all they would give him. The devotion of the Scotch drunkards to their poet is a devotion to their drunkenness, not to him. Doubtless there are many true-hearted men who bewail the sinner as much as they admire the genius, but the mass like him none worse for his faults. However, if it had been ordained and decreed that every drunkard who honored Burns should go without his whiskey for a week, there was not a dozen of them would have done it—not half a dozen. Their honor to him was a honor to themselves; it was an opportunity for drunkenness, at least in thousands of instances. As I stood by his monument some little time ago, I saw around it a most dismal, dingy set out of withered flowers and I thought “Ah, this is his honor! O, Burns! how hast thou spent thy life to have a withered wreath for the world’s payment of a life of mighty genius and a flood of marvellous song!” Yes, when the world pays best she pays nothing, and when she pays least, she pays her flatterers with scorn; she rewards their services with neglect and poverty. Many a statesman might I quote who has spent his life in the world’s service, and at first the world said “Go on, go on,” and he was clapped everywhere; he was doing something to serve his time; but he made a little mistake, a mistake perhaps, which will prove not to have been a mistake at all when the books of history shall be read with a clearer eye. “Down with him,” says the world, “we will have nothing more to do with him.” All he may have done before went for nothing; one mistake, one flaw in his political career—“Down with him, cast him to the dogs, we will have nought to do with him again.” Ah, the world pays scantily indeed! What will it do for those it loves the best! When it has done all it can, the last resource of the world is to give a man a title (and what is that)? And then to give him a tall pillar and set him up there to bear all weathers, to be pitilessly exposed to every storm; and there he stands for fools to gaze at, one of the world’s great ones paid in stone; it is true the world has paid that out of its own heart, for that is what the world’s heart is made of. The world pays scantily; but did you ever hear a Christian who complained thus of his Master?

“No,” will he say “when I serve Christ, I feel that my work is my wages; that labor for Christ is its own reward. He gives me joy on earth, with a fullness of bliss hereafter.” Oh! Christ is a good paymaster. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” He that serves Christ may get but little gold and silver such as this world calls precious, but he gets a gold and a silver that shall ne’er be melted in the last refining fire, that shall glitter among the precious things of immortality throughout eternity. The world pays niggardly and scantily, but not so Christ.

Again, if you will serve the world, and you wish to have gifts from it, the world will pay you *half-heartedly*. Now by the world, I mean the religious world quite as much as any other part of it; I mean the whole world, religious, political, good, bad, and indifferent—the whole lot of them. If you serve the world it will pay you half-heartedly. Let a man spend himself for his fellow-creatures’ interests, what will he get for it? Some will praise him, some will abuse him. The men that escape without abuse in this world, are the men who do nothing at all. He who is most valiant and useful, must expect to be most reprobated and abhorred. Those men who are borne upon the waves of popular applause are not the men whose worth is true; real philanthropists must swim against the stream. The whole list of the world’s benefactors is an army of martyrs. All along, the path of the good is marked with blood and fire. The world does not pay the men that serve it really, except with ingratitude. I say, to come back, even when the world does pay, it pays half-heartedly. Did you ever know a man yet, concerning whom the world’s mind was one? I never heard of any. “Oh,” says one, “So-and-so is one of the best men of his times.” Go down the next street, and you will hear it said, “He is the biggest vagabond living.” Go to one, and you will hear him say, “I never heard a man of such genius as that is.” “Oh,” says another, “mere twaddle.” “There is such a newspaper,” says one, “how ably it defends the rights of the people.” “Oh,” says another, “mere democracy; seeking to pull down everything that is constitutional and proper.” The world never made up its mind about any man yet. There is not a soul living concerning whom the world is unanimous. But when Christ gives anything, he always gives with all his heart. He does not say to his people, “There, I give you this, but still I have half-a-mind to keep it back.” No, Christ gives his heart to all his people. There is no double-mindedness in Jesus. If we are enabled by free grace to serve him and to love him, we may rest quite sure that in the rich reward which his grace shall give us, his whole heart shall go with every blessing. When Christ blesses the poor needy soul, he does not give with one hand, and smite with the other; but he gives him mercies with both his hands—both full; and he asks the sinner simply to receive all that he is willing to give.

Then again, whenever the world gives anything, it gives mostly to *those who do not want it*. I remember once, when a lad, having a dog, which I very much prized and some man in the street asked me to give him the dog; I thought it was pretty impudent, and I said as much. A gentlemen, however, to whom I told it, said, “Now suppose the Duke of So-and-so,”—who was a great man in the neighborhood—“asked you for the dog, would you give it him?” I said, “I think I would.” He said, “Then you are just like all the world; you would give to those who do not want.” Who in the whole of this congregation would object to give anything to the Queen? Not a soul of us, and yet, perhaps, there is no person in the world who so little needs our gifts. We can always give to those who do not require anything; for we feel that there is some little honor conferred upon us—an honor bestowed by the reception. Now, look at Jesus. When he gives to his friends, he gets no honor from them: the honor is in his own free heart that should lead him to give to such poor necessitous worms. Great men have gone to Christ with mere professions, and they have asked him to be good to them, but then they have at the same time declared, that they had a righteousness of their own,

and did not want much of him; and he has sent them about their business, and given them nothing. He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But whenever poor, lost sinners have gone to Christ, he has never turned one of them away—never. He has given all they could possibly want, and infinitely more than they thought they could ever expect. Might not Jesus say to us, when we ask him for the blessings of his grace, "You are impudent in daring to ask." But instead of that, he loves to be asked, and he freely and richly gives—"Not as the world giveth;" for he gives to those who need it most.

Again, there is another view of the world's gifts. The world giveth to *its friends*, Any man will help his own friends. If we help not our own relatives and friends then are we worse than heathen men and publicans. But the world generally confines its good wishes and blessings to its class, and kith, and kin. It cannot think of giving blessings to its enemies. Did you ever hear yet of the world's blessing an enemy? Never. It gives its benefactions to its friends, and but very scantily even to them. But Christ gives his benefactions to his enemies. "Not as the world giveth" he may truly say. The world says, "I must see whether you deserve it; I must see that your case is a good one." It enquires, and enquires, and enquires again; but Christ only sees that our case is a bad one, and then he gives. He wants not a good case but a bad case. He knows our necessity, and, once discovering our necessity, not all our sin can stop the hand of his bounty. Oh, if Jesus should call to mind some of the hard speeches we have uttered about him, he would never bless us surely, if it were not that his ways are far above our ways. Why, remember man, it is not long ago since you cursed him—since you laughed at his people—despised his ministers, and could spit upon his Bible. Jesus has cast all that behind his back, and loved you notwithstanding. Would the world have done that? Let a man get up and rail at his fellows, will they forgive, and, after forgiving, will they begin to bless? Will they die for their enemies? Oh, no! such a thing never entered into the heart of manhood. But Christ blesses rebels, traitors, enemies to his cross. He brings them to know his love, and taste of his eternal mercies.

A thousand remarks seem to start up and I scarcely know which to choose. "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." The world always gives with a *sparing motive*. The most of us are compelled to economy, if we give anything away to a poor man we generally hope that he will not come again. If we give him half-a-crown it is very often as we say to get rid of him. If we bestow a little charity it is in the hope that we shall not see his face just by-and-bye, for really we do not like the same men continually begging at our door when the world is so full of beggars. Did you ever hear of a man who gave a beggar something to encourage him to keep on begging of him? I must confess I never did such a thing, and am not likely to begin. But that is just what Christ does. When he gives us a little grace, his motive is to make us ask for more; and when he gives us more grace it is given with the very motive, to make us come and ask again. He gives us silver blessings to induce us to ask for golden mercies; and when we have golden favors, those same mercies are given on purpose to lead us to pray more earnestly, and open our mouth wider that we may receive more. What a strange giver Christ is! what a strange friend, that he gives on purpose to make us beg more! The more you ask of Christ, the more you can ask; the more you have got, the more you will want; the more you know him, the more you will desire to know him; the more grace you receive, the more grace you will pant after; and when you are full of grace, you will never be content till you get full of glory. Christ's way of giving is, "Of his fullness have we received, and grace for grace"—grace to make us pant for more grace; grace to make us long after something higher, something fuller and richer still. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

Again; when the world gives anything it is almost always with a *selfish motive*. The Christian man gives, not hoping to receive again; but the world lends that it may borrow; it gives that it may receive. There are many men whose whole lives are a looking after self. They would not like to be told so; but even their benefactions to a hospital, or to a charity, are merely given because the name should be in the list. We know that too many persons would not think of relieving private want unless they thought there was a merit in it, and so thought it would stand good for them at last. They would infinitely prefer to do their good in the lumps. I know, at this day, a man that I believe would give twenty pounds, fifty pounds, or a hundred pounds to a charity, but who would let his own relatives starve rather than give them anything, because it would never be known,—no one would talk about it. The world's motive for bestowing a blessing is in order that some rich fruit may flow from it. If the world rewards a warrior, its ostensible reason is that other soldiers may fight bravely. If it rewards some great artist, it is to encourage the profession, that is, to help themselves, by getting others to amuse them, as well as this man has done. There is always an ulterior object in the world's generosity. Not so in Christ's; when he gives us mercies, he has nothing whatever to get from us. It is our delight to live to him; but our living to him cannot increase his glory—he is God over all, blessed for ever. He gives us more than he can ever receive. And though we with grateful hearts desire to live to him, that very gratitude is first his gift. The well of love is filled out of the spring of God, otherwise it had been the grave of mercies, and not a fountain of praise.

Now, what more shall I say? I seem to have brought out the most prominent point of the world's giving, but let me add one more. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." All that the world gives, it only bestows *for a season*, it must go back again. Thou hast riches, man, as the reward of thy toils. What shalt thou be the better for them in a few short months? Thy broad acres, thy leagues of land shall dwindle into a short six feet of clay. Thy mansion, what shall it shrivel into, but into a small coffin, over which shall be scratched a little earth to hide thy putrid dust, and save the world a nuisance? The world will have all back of thee. Naked thou didst come into it, and it will take care thou shalt take nothing out of it, for naked shalt thou go out of it again. Oh, man, thou hast accumulated knowledge until thou hast become a walking cyclopaedia, but what shalt thou take with thee? What difference shall there be between thy hollow skull and that of the meanest peasant, when some wanton sexton, in some future year, shall take it up, or split it with his spade? What shalt thou be the better for all those big thoughts that have stretched thy skull, and all those marvellous conceptions that have made it ache so much, that thou couldst scarcely carry it upon thy shoulders? Thou wilt go back again to thy fellow earth, and the worm shall eat thee, and the philosopher shall taste no sweeter to his tooth than did the peasant; And, then, whether thou be prince or king, or whether thou be a poor, ignorant man, the worms shall make no distinction. Thou shalt still rot—still be consumed; noisome gases and a handful of dust shall be thy whole residuum. What then can the world give? If it tried it could not give thee anything that would last; it cannot give thee anything better than air. It can give thee nothing that can pass into eternity with thee. What though it follow thee with the trumpet of fame? That trumpet cannot be heard half-way across the Jordan. If all the men in the world clapped their hands in thy praise, not one angel, even on the very borders of the celestial world would observe the tumult of applause. The world can give thee nothing that thou canst carry with thee. Thou art at the best a pack-horse, that shall carry its burden till it ends its journey, and then it must lie down and die. Thou dost but carry a burden on thy back, and verily, death shall unload thee ere thou art suffered to enter another world. How different is

Christ in his gifts! What he gives he gives for ever. When he bestows mercies they are lasting things; no shadows does he give, but real substance—no fancies, but eternal realities does he bestow. Oh, men of this world, when your gold is melted—when your diamonds have dissolved in gas—when your estates have gone—when your hopes are lost, and when your goods are destroyed, then shall the people of God begin to know their riches; then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”

III. Now this brings me to one PRACTICAL REFLECTION, OR RATHER EXHORTATION TO GOD’S PEOPLE. If this be true, my hearer, I beseech thee serve not the world; serve none but Christ, for he is the best master; serve him with all thy might, because he so richly hath given and so richly will give. I would not serve the world for the best empire in it. A king once said he wished all his subjects could be kings for a day, for “they would soon discover,” he said, “that the art of governing is not so easy as they think, and that a crown is not so soft a thing to wear as they imagine.” No, the world may abuse us if it likes; if it abuse us we are not very sad thereat, because the world is not our master, and as long as our own Master is satisfied we care not for a stranger. If any one should walk into your garden, and say to your gardener, “I do not like the arrangement of these beds; I do not like those flowers; you are evidently a careless man;” he would say, “Well, my master has been round this morning; he did not say much, but I saw a smile of satisfaction on his face, therefore, what is that to you? it is no business of yours. I am not your servant; I do not serve you.” Now, the world is a bad paymaster to those that obey and serve it. Let every Christian make up his mind that he will have nothing to do with serving the world. If the world scorns and frowns, let him say, “It is no business of yours; you are not my master; I do not serve you. If it amuses you to abuse me go on; it will not hurt me.” There is even in the mind of Christians at times too much of a tendency to time-serving. We are all so apt to think that we really must bow to public opinion, to this, that, and the other. Oh! you will never be happy until the Holy Ghost has brought you to this,—that you will fear God, and that you will fear no one else—that you will serve God with undivided heart. I go further: I would not even serve the church if I must have it for a master. I can serve God, I can serve Christ; for Christ is a blessed master; but I would not advise any of you to make the church your master. Wherever the church is we are all bound to serve the brethren, to serve the church of Christ as we are bound to assist in a common cause, but think not that even the dictum of the church is to be your judge. Imagine not that even its praise is that which you are to seek. You are to seek the praise of Christ. His church may do wrong, his ministers may mistake, but Christ himself can never be in error. Serve Christ—this is the practical exhortation from the whole subject. My dear friends, you that love Christ, and have been chosen by him from before the foundation of the world, who have been bought with his blood, have been washed, and pardoned, and forgiven, if Christ gives to you, not as the world gives then I beseech you serve Christ better than worldlings serve the world. Oh, it is astonishing what men have done to serve the world. They have rushed to the cannon’s mouth, and given their life to be food for powder, and they have thought they were well rewarded with a little praise. Men, too, have sweated at the furnace; they have spent their livings, have starved their families, to invent some luxuries for the tables of the rich. Men have undergone unheard of labors, toils that positively appal you to read of, merely to become eminent in their profession, to be first in the rank of artisans among which they were numbered.

When the world has a gulf to fill, it never lacks a Curtis to leap into it, but Christ often sees his cause left and deserted by reason of the coldness of his friends. There is many a battle wherein the warriors of Christ turn their backs, though armed and carrying bows. I was thinking yesterday, and

the thought struck me forcibly, that one thousand eight hundred years ago, or a little more, there were a few men met in an upper chamber met for worship—about four hundred of them. They met, and they prayed, and they preached, and there was a divine fire kindled in their bosoms; and in a few years, they had preached the gospel in every language under heaven, and the mass of the world became professedly Christians. Now here is a room, not with four hundred persons, but oftentimes filled with thousands, and yet, does the religion of Christ progress as it should do? No. If there were but a little, but a hundredth part of the zeal of Christ's disciples that there was in olden times, before another year rolls round, there would be missionaries in every town; the gospel would be preached in every village of India, and China, and every other nation accessible to the foot of the missionary. As it is we are an idle generation, a tribe of dwarfs has succeeded to a race of giants, and now Christ's cause creeps where it once ran, and only runs where once it was wont to fly as with wings of lightning. Oh, that God would make bare his arm! And if ever he does, the first sign of it will be that the church will begin to serve Christ more zealously. Some will give their blood to die in the preaching of the Word. Others will pour their wealth into coffers of the church and every living soul, numbered in the family of Christ, will spend itself and be spent for its Master's honor. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." O Jesus, not as the world's followers give, do we desire to give to thee. They give their lives but once, we would "die daily;" they give much of their talent, we would give all. Take our heart, and seal it, make it as thine own, that we may live to thine honor, and die in thine arms, and sit upon thy throne with thee for ever and ever.

Little Sins

A Sermon

(No. 248)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 17th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Is it not a little one?”—Genesis 19:20.

THESE words we shall take for a *motto*, rather than a *text* in the ordinary acceptance of that term. I shall not this morning attempt to explain the connection. It was the utterance of Lot, when he pleaded for the salvation of Zoar; but I shall take it altogether away from the connection in which it stands, and make use of it in another fashion. The great Father of Lies hath multitudes of devices by which he seeks to ruin the souls of men. He uses false weights and false balances in order to deceive them. Sometimes he uses false times, declaring at one hour that it is too early to seek the Lord, and at another that it is now too late. And he uses false quantities, for he will declare that great sins are but little, and as for what he confesses to be little sins, he makes them afterwards to be nothing at all—mere peccadilloes, almost worthy of forgiveness in themselves. Many souls, I doubt not, have been caught in this trap, and being snared thereby, have been destroyed. They have ventured into sin where they thought the stream was shallow, and, fatally deceived by its depth, they have been swept away by the strength of the current to that cataract which is the ruin of such vast multitudes of the souls of men.

It shall be my business this morning to answer this temptation, and try to put a sword in your hands wherewith to resist the enemy when he shall come upon you with this cry;—“Is it not a little one?” and tempt you into sin because he leads you to imagine that there is but very little harm in it. “Is it not a little one?”

With regard then to this temptation of Satan concerning the littleness of sin, I would make this first answer, *the best of men have always been afraid of little sins*. The holy martyrs of God have been ready to endure the most terrible torments rather than step so much as one inch aside from the road of truth and righteousness. Witness Daniel: when the king’s decree went forth that no man should worship God for such and such a time, nevertheless he prayed three times a day as aforetime, with his window open towards Jerusalem, not fearing the king’s commandment. Why could he not have retired into an inner chamber? Why might he not have ceased from vocal prayer, and have kept his petitions in his thought and in his heart? Would he not have been as well accepted as when he kneeled as usual, with the window open, so that all the world might see him? Ah! but Daniel judged that little as the offence might seem, he would rather suffer death at the jaws of the lion, than he would by that little offence provoke the anger of his God, or lead men to blaspheme his holy name, because his servant had been afraid to obey. Mark, too, the three holy children. They are asked by king Nebuchadnezzar simply to bend the knee and worship the golden image which he had set up. How slight the homage! One bend of the knee, and all is done. One prostration, and they may go their way safely. Not so. They will not worship the golden image which the king has set up. They can burn for God, but they cannot turn from God. They can suffer, but they will not sin; and though all the world might have excused them with the plea of expediency, if they had

performed that one little act of idol worship, yet they will not do it, but would rather be exposed to the fury of a furnace, seven times heated, than commit an offence against the Most High. So also among the early Christians. You may have read of that noble warrior for Christ, Martin Arethusa, the bishop. He had led the people to pull down the idol temple in the city over which he presided; and when the apostate emperor Julian came to power, he commanded the people to rebuild the temple. They were bound to obey on pain of death. But Arethusa all the while lifted up his voice against the evil they were doing, until the wrath of the king fell upon him of a sudden. He was, however, offered his life on condition that he would subscribe so much as a single half penny towards the building of the temple; nay, less than that, if he would cast one grain of incense into the censer of the false god he might escape. But he would not do it. He feared God, and he would not do the most tiny little sin to save his life. They therefore exposed his body, and gave him up to the children to prick him with knives; then they smeared him with honey, and he was exposed to wasps and stung to death. But all the while the grain of incense he would not give. He could give his body to wasps, and die in the most terrible pains, but he could not, he would not, he dared not sin against God. A noble example!

Now, brethren, if men have been able to perceive so much of sin in little transgressions, that they would bear inconceivable tortures rather than commit them, must there not be something dreadful after all in the thing of which Satan says, "Is it not a little one?" Men, with their eyes well opened by divine grace, have seen a whole hell slumbering in the most minute sin. Gifted with a microscopic power, their eyes have seen a world of iniquity hidden in a single act, or thought, or imagination of sin; and hence they have avoided it with horror,— have passed by and would have nought to do with it. But if the straight road to heaven be through flames, through floods, through death itself, they had sooner go through all these torments than turn one inch aside to tread an easy and an erroneous path. I say this should help us when Satan tempts us to commit little sins,—this should help us to the answer, "No, Satan, if God's people think it great, they know better than thou dost. Thou art a deceiver; they are true. I must shun all sin, even though thou sayest it is but little." It may be further answered, in reply to this temptation of Satan with regard to little sins, thus:—"Little sins lead to great ones. Satan! thou biddest me commit a small iniquity. I know thee whom thou art, thou unholy one! Thou desirest me to put in the thin end of the wedge. Thou knowest when that is once inserted thou canst drive it home, and split my soul in twain. Nay, stand back! Little though the temptation be, I dread thee, for thy little temptation leads to something greater, and thy small sin makes way for something worse."

We all see in nature how easily we may prove this,—*that little things lead to greater things*. If it be desired to bridge a gulf, it is often the custom to shoot an arrow, and cross it with a line almost as thin as film. That line passes over and a string is drawn after it, and after that some small rope, and after that a cable, and after that the swinging suspension bridge, that makes a way for thousands. So it is oft times with Satan. It is but a thought that he would shoot across the mind. That thought shall carry a desire; that desire a look; that look a touch; that touch a deed; that deed a habit; and that habit something worse, until the man, from little beginnings, shall be swamped and drowned in iniquity. Little things, we say, lead on to something worse. And thus it has always been. A spark is dropped by some unwary traveller amidst the dry grass of the prairie. It is but a spark; "Is it not a little one?" A child's foot may tread it out; one drop from the rain-cloud may quench it. But ah! what sets the prairie in a blaze? what bids the rolling waves of flame drive before them all the beasts of the field? what is it that consumes the forest, locking it in its fiery arms? what is it that burns

down the habitation of man, or robs the reaper of his harvest? It is this solitary spark,—the one spark—the breeder of the flames. So is it with little sins. Keep them back Oh Satan! They be sparks, but the very fire of hell is only a growth from them. The spark is the mother of conflagration, and though it be a little one I can have nought to do with it. Satan always begins with us as he did with Achan. He showed Achan, first of all, a goodly Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold. Achan looked at it: was it not a little thing to do,—to look? Achan touched it: was not that a little thing? How slight a sin—to touch the forbidden thing! He takes it, and carries it away to his tent, and—here is worse,— he hides it. And at length he must die for the awful crime. Oh! take heed of those small beginnings of sin. Beginnings of sin are like the letting out of water: first, there is an ooze; then a drip; then a slender stream; then a vein of water; and then, at last, a flood: and a rampart is swept before it, a continent is drowned. Take heed of small beginnings, for they lead to worse. There was never a man yet that came to the gallows but confessed that he began with small thefts;—the stealing of a book at school—the pilfering, afterwards, from his master's till leading to the joining of the gang of robbers,—the joining of the gang of robbers leading to worse crimes and, at last, the deed was done, the murder was committed, which brought him to an ignominious death. Little sins often act as burglars do;— burglars sometimes take with them a little child; they put the little child into a window that is too small for them to enter, and then he goes and opens the door to let in the thieves. So do little sins act. They are but little ones, but they creep in, and they open the door for great ones. A traitor inside the camp may be but a dwarf, and may go and open the gates of the city and let in a whole army. Dread sin; though it be never so small, dread it. You cannot see all that is in it. It is the mother of ten thousand mischiefs. The mother of mischief, they say, is as small as a midge's egg; and certainly, the smallest sin has ten thousand mischiefs sleeping within its bowels.

St. Augustine gives a picture of how far men will go when they once begin to sin. There was a man who in argument declared that the devil made flies; “Well,” said the man with whom he was arguing, “If the devil made flies, then it is but little more to say the devil made worms!” “Well” said the other, “I believe it.” “Well” said the man, “If the devil made worms, how do you know but what he made small birds?” “Well,” said the other, “It is likely he did!” “Well,” resumed the man with whom he was arguing, “But if he made small birds, why may he not have made big ones? And if he made big birds, why may he not have made man? And if he made man, why may he have not made the world?” “You see,” says St. Augustine, “By one admission, by once permitting the devil to be thought the creator of a fly, the man came to believe that the devil was the Creator.” Just get one small error into your minds, get one small evil into your thoughts, commit one small act of sin in your life, permit these things to be dandled, and fondled, favoured, petted, and treated with respect, and you cannot tell whereunto they may grow. They are small in their infancy: they will be giants when they come to their full growth. Thou little knowest how near thy soul may be to destruction, when thou wantonly indulgest in the smallest act of sin!

Another argument may be used to respond to this temptation of the devil. He says, “Is it not a little one?” “Yes,” we reply, “*But little sins multiply very fast.*” Like all other little things, there is a marvellous power of multiplication in little sins. As for murder, it is a masterly sin; but we do not often hear of it compared with the multitude of minor sins. The smaller the guilt, the more frequent it becomes. The elephant hath but a small progeny and multiplieth slowly. But the aphid hath thousands springing from it within an hour. It is even so with little sins: they multiply rapidly, beyond all thought—one becomes the mother of multitudes. And, mark this, little sins are as mighty for mischief in their multitude, as if they were greater sins. Have you ever read the story of the

locusts when they sweep through a land? I was reading but yesterday of a missionary who called all the people together when he heard that the locusts were coming up the valley; and kindling huge fires, they hoped to drive off the living stream. The locusts were but small; but it seemed as if the whole of the blazing fires were quenched—they marched over the dead and burning bodies of their comrades, and on they went, one living stream. Before them everything was green, like the garden of Eden; behind them everything was dry and desert. The vines were barked, the trees had lost every leaf, and stretched their naked arms to the sky, as if winter had rent away their foliage. There was not then so much as a single blade of grass, or sprig upon the tree, that even a goat might have eaten. The locusts had done all this, and left utter devastation in their track. Why this? The locust is but a little thing! Ay, but in their number how mighty they become! Dread then a little sin, for it will be sure to multiply. It is not one, it is many of these little sins. The plague of lice, or the plague of flies in Egypt, was perhaps the most terrible that the Egyptians ever felt. Take care of those little insect sins which may be your destruction. Surely if you are led to feel them, and to groan under them, and to pray to God for deliverance from them, it may be said that in your preservation is the finger of God. But let these sins alone, let them increase and multiply, and your misery is near at hand. Listen not then to the evil voice of Satan when he cries, “Is it not a little one?”

Years ago there was not a single thistle in the whole of Australia. Some Scotchman who very much admired thistles—rather more than I do—thought it was a pity that a great island like Australia should be without that marvellous and glorious symbol of his great nation. He, therefore, collected a packet of thistle-seeds, and sent it over to one of his friends in Australia. Well, when it was landed, the officers might have said, “Oh, let it in; ‘is it not a little one?’ Here is but a handful of thistle-down, oh, let it come in; it will be but sown in a garden—the Scotch will grow it in their gardens; they think it a fine flower, no doubt,—let them have it, it is but meant for their amusement.” Ah, yes, it was but a little one; but now whole districts of country are covered with it, and it has become the farmer’s pest and plague. It was a little one; but, all the worse for that, it multiplied and grew. If it had been a great evil, all men would have set to work to crush it. This little evil is not to be eradicated, and of that country it may be said till doomsday,— “Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth.” Happy would it have been if the ship that brought that seed had been wrecked. No boon is it to those of our countrymen there on the other side of the earth, but a vast curse. Take heed of the thistle-seed; little sins are like it. Take care they are not admitted into your heart. Endeavour to shun them as soon as Satan presents them. Go, seek by the grace of God and his Holy Spirit to keep them away; for if not, these little sins will multiply so fast, that they will be your ruin and destruction.

Once again; little sins, after all, if you look at them in another aspect, are great. *A little sin involves a great principle.* Suppose that to-morrow the Austrians should send a body of men into Sardinia. If they only send a dozen it would be equal to a declaration of war. It may be said, “Is it not a little one?—a very small band of soldiers that we have sent?” “Yes,” it would be replied, “but it is the principle of the thing. You cannot be allowed with impunity to send your soldiers across the border. War must be proclaimed, because you have violated the frontier, and invaded the land.” It is not necessary to send a hundred thousand troops into a country to break a treaty. It is true the breach of the treaty may appear to be small; but if the slightest breach be allowed, the principle is gone. There is very much more in principle than men imagine. In a sin against God, it is not so much the thing itself as the principle of the thing at which God looks; and the principle of obedience is as much broken, as much dishonoured by a little sin as by a great sin. O man! the Creator hath

made thee to obey him. Thou breakest his law; thou sayst it is but a little breach. Still it is a breach. The law is broken. Thou art disobedient. His wrath abideth on thee. The principle of obedience is compromised in thy smallest transgression, and, therefore, is it great. Besides, I don't know whether the things Christian men call *little sins* are not, after all, greater than what they call *great sins*, in some respects. If you have a friend, and he does you a displeasure for the sake of ten thousand pounds, you say, "Well, he had a very great temptation. It is true he has committed a great fault, but still he has wronged me to some purpose." But suppose your friend should vex and grieve your mind for the sake of a farthing; what would you think of that? "This is wanton," you would say. "This man has done it out of sheer malevolence toward me." Now, if Adam had been denied by his Maker the whole of Paradise, and had been put into a stony desert, I do not think that, had he taken all Paradise to himself, there would have been more sin in that act, than when placed in the midst of the garden, he simply stole one fruit from the forbidden tree. The transgression involved a great principle, because he did it wantonly. He had so little to gain, he had so much to lose when he dishonored God. It has been said, that to sin without temptation is to sin like the devil, for the devil was not tempted when he sinned; and to sin with but little temptation is to sin like the devil. When there is great temptation offered, I do not say there is any excuse, but when there is none, where the deed is but little, bringing but little pleasure, and involving but a small consequence, there is a wantonness about the sin which makes it greater in moral obliquity, than many other iniquities that men commit. Ay, you cry out against a great felon, when he is discovered; see of how much he robbed men; see how he wronged the widow and robbed the fatherless! I know it. God forbid that I should make any excuse for him; but that man had a name to maintain. He had thousands of temptations before him to get immensely rich. He thought he never should be discovered. He had a family to keep. He had got involved in expensive habits, and there are many things to be said for his extenuation. But you, if you indulge in some slight sin which brings you no pleasure, which involves no important interests, by which you have nothing to get, I say you sin wantonly. You have committed an act which has in it the very virus and bitterness of wilful obstinate, designing disobedience, because there is not even the extenuation, or excuse, or apology, that you should gain something thereby. Little sins are, after all, tremendous sins, viewed in the light of God's law. Looked upon as involving a breach of that inviolable standard of right, and considered as having been committed wantonly, I say they are great, and I know not that those sins men conceive to be gross and great, are greater and grosser in reality than these.

Thus I have given you several arguments with which to answer that temptation, "Is it not a little one?"

Now I am about to speak to the child of God only, and I say to him, "Brother if Satan tempts thee to say, 'Is it not a little one?'" reply to him, "Ah, Satan but little though it be, it may mar my fellowship with Christ. Sin cannot destroy but it will annoy; it cannot ruin my soul, but it will soon ruin my peace. Thou sayest it is a little one, Satan, but my Saviour had to die for it, or otherwise I should have been shut out from heaven. 'That little one' may be like a little thorn in my flesh, to prick my heart and wound my soul. I cannot, I dare not indulge in this little sin, for I have been greatly forgiven, and I must greatly love. A little sin in others would be a great sin for me—' How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.'"

Is it a little one, Satan? But a little stone in the shoe will make a traveller limp. A little thorn may breed a fester. A little cloud may hide the sun. A cloud of the size of a man's hand may bring a deluge of rain. Avaunt Satan! I can have nought to do with thee; for since I know that Jesus bled

for little sins, I cannot wound his heart by indulging in them afresh. A little sin, Satan! Hath not my Master said, "Take us the foxes, *the little* foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Lo! these little things do mischief to my tender heart. These little sins burrow in my soul, and soon make it to become a very den and hole of the wild beasts that Jesus hates, soon drive him away from my spirit so that he will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with me. A great sin cannot destroy a Christian, but a little sin can make him miserable. Jesus will not walk with his people unless they drive out every known sin. He says, "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." There are very many Christians in the world that do not see their Saviour's face by the month together, and seem to be quite content without his company. I understand you not, nor do I wish to know how it is, that you can reconcile your souls to the absence of your Lord. A loving wife, without her husband for months and years, seems to me to be sorely tried. Surely it must be an affliction for a tender child to be separated from his father. We know that in our childhood it was always so, and we looked forward to our return home with joy. And art thou a child of God, yet happy without seeing thy Father's face? What! thou the spouse of Christ, and yet content without his company! Surely, surely, surely, thou hast fallen into a sad state. Thou must have gone astray, if such be thy experience, for the true chaste spouse of Christ mourns like a dove without her mate, when he has left her. Ask, then, the question, what has driven Christ from you? He hides his face behind the wall of your sins. That wall may be built up of little pebbles, as easily as of great stones. The sea is made of drops, the rocks are made of grains; and ah! surely the sea which divides thee from Christ may be filled with the drops of thy little sins; and the rock which is to wreck thy barque, may have been made by daily working of the coral insects of thy little sins. Therefore, take heed thereunto; for if thou wouldst live with Christ, and walk with Christ, and see Christ, and have fellowship with Christ, take heed, I pray thee, of the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.

And now, leaving the child of God thus awhile, I turn myself to address others of you who have some thought with regard to your souls, but who could not yet be ranked among those that fear God with a true heart. To you, I know, Satan often offers this temptation— "Is it not a little one?" May God help you to answer him whenever he thus attacks you. "Is it not a little one?" And so, young man, the devil has tempted thee to commit the first petty theft. "Is it not a little one?" And so he has bidden thee, young man, for the first time in thy life to spend the day of rest in foolish pleasure. It was but a little one, he said, and thou hast taken him at his word, and thou hast committed it. It was but a little one, and so you have told a lie. It was but a little one, and you have gone into the assembly of the frivolous and mixed in the society of scorners. It was but a little one, there could not be much hurt in it, it could not do much mischief to your soul. Ah! stop awhile. Dost thou know that a little sin, if wantonly indulged, will prevent thy salvation? "The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Christ will reveal salvation from all his sins to the man who hates all his sins; but if thou keepest one sin to thyself, thou shalt never have mercy at his hands. If thou wilt forsake all thy ways, and turn with full purpose of heart to Christ, the biggest sin thou hast ever committed shall not destroy thy soul; but if a little sin be harboured, thy prayers will be unheard, thy sighs disregarded, and thy earnest cries shall return into thy bosom without a blessing. You have been in prayer lately, you have been seeking Christ, you have been praying with all your might that God would meet with you. Now months have rolled over your

head, you are not yet saved, not yet have you received the comfortable assurance of your pardon. Young man, is it not likely that some little known sin is still harboured in your heart? Mark, then, God will never be at one with thee till thou and thy sins are twain. Part with thy sins, or else part with all hope, though thou hide but so much as a grain of sin back from God. He will not, he cannot have any mercy on thee. Come to him just as thou art, but renounce thy sins. Ask him to set thee free from every lust, from every false way, from every evil thing, or else, mark thee, thou shalt never find grace and favour at his hands. The greatest sin in the world, repented of, shall be forgiven, but the least unrepented sin shall sink thy soul lower than the lowest hell. Mark then, again, sinner, thou who indulgest in little sins sometimes. These little sins show that thou art yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Rowland Hill tells a curious tale of one of his hearers who sometimes visited the theatre. He was a member of the church. So going to see him, he said, I understand Mr. So-and-so, you are very fond of frequenting the theatre. No, sir, he said, that's false. I go now and then just for a great treat, still I don't go because I like it; it is not a habit of mine. Well, said Rowland Hill, suppose some one should say to me, Mr. Hill, I understand you eat carrion, and I should say, no, no, I don't eat carrion. It is true, I now and then have a piece of stinking carrion for a great treat. Why, he would say, you have convicted yourself, it shows that you like it better than most people, because you save it up for a special treat. Other men only take it as common daily food, but you keep it by way of a treat. It shows the deceitfulness of your heart, and manifests that you still love the ways and wages of sin.

Ah, my friends, those men that say little sins have no vice in them whatever, they do but give indications of their own character; they show which way the stream runs. A straw may let you know which way the wind blows, or even a floating feather; and so may some little sin be an indication of the prevailing tendency of the heart. My hearer, if thou lovest sin, though it be but a little one, thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Thou art still a stranger to divine grace. The wrath of God abideth on thee. Thou art a lost soul unless God change thy heart.

And yet, another remark here. Sinner, thou sayest it is but a little one. But dost thou know that God will damn thee for thy little sins? Look angry now, and say the minister is harsh. But wilt thou look angry at thy God in the day when he shalt condemn thee for ever? If there were a good man in a prison to-day and you did not go to see him, would you think that a great sin? Certainly not, you say, I should not think of doing such a thing. If you saw a man hungry and you did not feed him, would you think that a great sin? No, you say, I should not. Nevertheless, these are the very things for which men are sent to hell. What said the Judge? "I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was sick and in prison and ye visited me not. Forasmuch as ye have not done this unto the least of these, my brethren, ye have not done it unto me." Now, if these things, which we only consider to be little sins, actually send myriads to hell, ought we not to stop and tremble ere we talk lightly of sin, since little sins may be our eternal destroyers. Ah, man, the pit of hell is digged for little sins. An eternity of woe is prepared for what men call little sins. It is not alone the murderer, the drunkard, the whoremonger, that shall be sent to hell. The wicked, it is true, shall be sent there, but the little sinner with all the nations that forget God shall have his portion there also. Tremble, therefore, on account of little sins.

When I was a little lad, I one day read at family prayer the chapter in the Revelations concerning the "bottomless pit." Stopping in the midst of it, I said to my grandfather, "Grandfather, what does this mean—the bottomless pit?" He said, "Go on child, go on." So I read that chapter, but I took great care to read it the next morning also. Stopping again I said, "Bottomless pit, what does this

mean?" "Go on," he said, "Go on." Well it came the next morning, and so on for a fortnight; there was nothing to be read by me of a morning but this same chapter, for explained it should be if I read it a month. And I can remember the horror of my mind when he told me what the idea was. There is a deep pit, and the soul is falling down,—oh how fast it is falling! There! the last ray of light at the top has disappeared, and it falls on—on—on, and so it goes on falling—on—on—on—for a thousand years! "Is it not getting near the bottom yet? won't it stop?" No, no—the cry is, on—on—on, "I have been falling a million years, is it not near the bottom yet?" No, you are no nearer the bottom yet: it is the "*bottomless* pit;" it is on—on—on, and so the soul goes on falling, perpetually, into a deeper depth still, falling for ever into the "bottomless pit"—on —on—on, into the pit that has no bottom! Woe without termination, without hope of it's coming to a conclusion. The same dreadful idea is contained in those words, "The wrath to come." Mark, hell is always "the wrath to come." If a man has been in hell a thousand years, it is still "to come." As to what you have suffered in the past it is as nothing, in the dread account, for still the wrath is "to come." And when the world has grown grey with age, and the fires of the sun are quenched in darkness, it is still "the wrath to come." And when other worlds have sprung up, and have turned into their palsied age, it is still "the wrath to come." And when your soul, burnt through and through with anguish, sighs at last to be annihilated, even then this awful thunder shall be heard, "the wrath to come—to come—to come." Oh, what an idea! I know not how to utter it! And yet for little sins, remember you incur "the wrath to come." Oh, if I am to be damned, I would be damned for something; but to be delivered up to the executioner and sent into "the wrath to come" for little sins which do not even make me famous as a rebel, this is to be damned indeed. Oh that ye would arise, that ye would flee from the wrath to come, that ye would forsake the little sins, and fly to the great cross of Christ to have little sins blotted out, and little offences washed away. For oh,—again I warn you,—if ye die with little sins unforgiven, with little sins unrepented of, there shall be no little hell; the great wrath of the great king is ever to come, in a pit without a bottom, in a hell the fire of which never shall be quenched, and the worm of which ne'er shall die. Oh, "the wrath to come! the wrath to come!" It is enough to make one's heart ache to think of it. God help you to flee from it. May you escape from it now, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Vision of the Latter-Day Glories

A Sermon

(No. 249)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 24th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And it shall come to pas in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.”—Isaiah 2:2., & Micah 4:1.

THE PROPHETS OF GOD wore anciently called seers, for they had a supernatural sight which could pierce through the gloom of the future and behold the things which are not seen as yet, but which God hath ordained for the last times. They frequently described what they saw with spiritual eyes after the form or fashion of something which could be seen by the eye of nature. The vision was so substantial that they could picture it in words, so that we also may behold in open vision, the glorious things which they beheld after a supernatural sort. Let us imagine Isaiah as he stood upon Mount Zion. He looked about him and there were “the mountains that are round about Jerusalem” far outvying it in height, but yielding to Zion in glory. Dearer to his soul than even the snow-capped glories of Lebanon which glittered afar off was that little hill of Zion, for there upon its summit stood the temple, the shrine of the living God. the place of his delight, the home of song, the house of sacrifice, the great gathering-place whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord. to serve Jehovah, the God of Abraham. Standing at the gate of that glorious temple which had been piled by the matchless art of Solomon, he looked into the future and he saw, with tearful eye, the structure burned with fire; he beheld it cast down and the plough driven over its foundations. He saw the people carried away into Babylon, and the nation cast off for a season. Looking once more through the glass he beheld the temple rising from its ashes, with glory outwardly diminished, but really increased. He saw on till he beheld Messiah himself in the form of a little babe carried into the second temple; he saw him there, and he rejoiced; but ere he had time for gladness his eye glanced onward to the cross; he saw Messias nailed to the tree; he beheld his back ploughed and mangled with the whip. “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,” arid the prophet, and he paused awhile to bemoan the bleeding Prince of the House of David. His eye was now doomed to a long and bitter weeping, for he saw the invading hosts of the Romans setting up the standard of desolation in the city. He saw the holy city burned with fire and utterly destroyed. His spirit was almost melted in him. But once more he flew through time with eagle wing, and scanned futurity with eagle eye; he soared aloft in imagination, and began to sing of the last days—the end of dispensations and of time. He saw Messias ones again on earth. He saw that little hill of Zion rising to the clouds—reaching to heaven itself. He beheld the New Jerusalem descending from above, God dwelling among men, and all the nations flowing to the tabernacle of the Most High God, where they paid him holy worship.

We shall not, to-day, look through all the dim vista of Zion’s tribulations. We will leave the avenue of troubles and of trials through which the church *has* passed and *is* to pass, and we will come, by faith, to the last days; and may God help us while we indulge in a glorious vision of that

which is to be ere long, when “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.” The prophet saw two things in the vision. He saw *the mountain exalted*, and he beheld *the nations flowing to it*. Now will you use your imagination for a moment; for there is a picture here which I can scarcely compare to anything, except one of Martin’s magnificent paintings, in which he throws together such masses of light and shade that the imagination is left at liberty to stretch her wings and fly to the utmost height. In the present instance, you will not be able to outstrip the reality, however high you may endeavor to soar; for that which is in our text will certainly be greater than that which the preacher can utter, or that which you may be able to conceive.

Transport yourselves for a moment to the foot of Mount Zion. As you stand there, you observe that it is but a very little hill. Bashan is far loftier, and Carmel and Sharon outvie it. As for Lebanon, Zion is but a little hillock compared with it. If you think for a moment of the Alps, or of the loftier Andes, or of the yet mightier Himalayas, this mount Zion seems to be a very little hill, a mere mole-hill insignificant, despicable, and obscure. Stand there for a moment, until the Spirit of God touches your eye, and you shall see this hill begin to grow. Up it mounts, with the temple on its summit, till it outreaches Tabor. Onward it grows, till Carmel, with its perpetual green, is left behind, and Salmon, with its everlasting snow sinks before it. Onward still it grows, till the snowy peaks of Lebanon are eclipsed. Still onward mounts the hill, drawing with its mighty roots other mountains and hills into its fabric; and onward it rises, till piercing the clouds it reaches above the Alps; and onwards still, till the Himalayas seem to be sucked into its bowels, and the greatest mountains of the earth appear to be but as the roots that strike out from the side of the eternal hill; and there it rises till you can scarcely see the top, as infinitely above all the higher mountains of the world as they are above the valleys. Have you caught the idea, and do you see there afar off upon the lofty top, not everlasting snows, but a pure crystal table-land, crowned with a gorgeous city, the metropolis of God, the royal palace of Jesus the King. The sun is eclipsed by the light which shines from the top of this mountain; the moon ceases from her brightness, for there is now no night: but this one hill, lifted up on high, illuminates the atmosphere, and the nations of them that are saved are walking in the light thereof. The hill of Zion hath now outsoared all others, and all the mountains and hills of the earth are become as nothing before her. This is the magnificent picture of the text. I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this—a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing, till all the high hills become absorbed, and that which was but a little rising ground before, becomes a hill the top whereof reacheth to the seventh heavens. Now we have here a picture of what the church is to be.

Of old, the church was like Mount Zion, a very little hill. What saw the nations of the earth when they looked upon it?—a humble man with twelve disciples. But that little hill grew, and some thousands were baptized in the name of Christ; it grew again and became mighty. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands began to break in pieces kingdoms, and now at this day the hill of Zion stands a lofty hill. But still, compared with the colossal systems of idolatry, she is but small. The Hindoo and the Chinese turn to our religion, and say, “It is an infant of yesterday; ours is the religion of ages.” The Easterns compare Christianity to some miasma that creeps along the fenny lowlands, but their systems they imagine to be like the Alps, outsoaring the heavens in height. Ah, but we reply to this, “Your mountain crumbles and your hill dissolves, but our hill of Zion has been growing, and strange to say, it has life within its bowels, and grow on it *shall*, grow on it *must*, till all the systems of idolatry shall become less than nothing before it, till false gods being cast down,

mighty systems of idolatry being overthrown, this mountain shall rise above them all, and on, and on, and on, shall this Christian religion grow, until converting into its mass all the deluded followers of the heresies and idolatries of man, the hill shall reach to heaven, and God in Christ shall be all in all." Such is the destiny of our church, she is to be an all-conquering church, rising above every competitor.

We may more fully explain this in two or three ways. The church will be like a high mountain, for she will be *pre-eminently conspicuous*. I believe that at this period the thoughts of men are more engaged upon the religion of Christ than upon any other. It is true, and there be few that will deny it, that every other system is growing old: gray hairs are scattered here and there, although the followers of these religions know it. As for Mahomet, has he not become now effete with grey old age? And the sabre once so sharp to slay the unbeliever hath it not been blunted with time and rested into its scabbard? As for the old idolatries, the religion of Confucius, or of Budha, where are their missionaries, where the old activity that made minor idolatries bow before them? They are now content to be confined within their own limit, they feel that their hour is come that they can grow no further, for their strong man is declining into old age. But the Christian religion has become more conspicuous now than ever it was. In every part of the world all people are thinking of it; the very gates of Japan—once fast closed—are now open to it, and soon shall the trumpet voice of the gospel be heard there, and the name of Jesus the Son of the Highest shall there be proclaimed by the lips of his chosen servants. The hill is already growing, and mark you, it is to grow higher yet; it is to be so conspicuous, that in every hamlet of the world the name of Christ shall be known and feared. There shall not be a Bedouin in his tent, there shall not be a Hottentot in his kraal, there shall not be a Laplander in the midst of his eternal snow, or an African in that great continent of thirst, that shall not have heard of Christ. Rising higher, and higher, and higher, from north to south, from east to west, this mountain shall be beheld; not like the star of the north which cannot be seen in the south, nor like the "cross" of the south which must give way before the "bear" of the north—this mountain, strange to say it, contrary to nature shall be visible from every land. Far-off islands of the sea shall behold it, and they that are near shall worship at the foot thereof. It shall be pre-eminently conspicuous in clear, cloudless radiance gladdening the people of the earth. This I think is one meaning of the text, when the prophet declares "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains. and shall be exalted above the hills."

This, however, is but a small part of the meaning. He means that the church of Christ shall become *awful and venerable in her grandeur*. It has never been my privilege to be able to leave this country for any time, to stand at the foot of the loftier mountain" of Europe, but even the little hills of Scotland, where half way up the mist is slumbering, struck me with some degree of awe. These are some of God's old works, high and lofty, talking to the stars, lifting up their heads above the clouds as though they were ambassadors from earth ordained to speak to God in silence far aloft. But poets tell us—and travelers who have but little poetry say the same—that standing at the foot of some of the stupendous mountains of Europe, and of Asia, the soul is subdued with the grandeur of the scene. There, upon the father of mountains, lie the eternal snows glittering in the sun-light, and the spirit wonders to see such mighty things as these? such massive ramparts garrisoned with storms. We seem to be but as insects crawling at their base, while they appear to stand like cherubims before the throne of God, sometimes covering their face with clouds of mist, or at other times lifting up their white heads, and singing their silent and eternal hymn before the throne of the Most High. There is something awfully grand in a mountain, but how much more so in such a

mountain as is described in our text, which is to be exalted above all hills, and above all the highest mountains of the earth.

The church is to be awful in her grandeur. Ah! now she is despised; the infidel barketh at her, it is all he can do; the followers of old superstitions as yet pay her but little veneration. The religion of Christ, albeit that it has to us all the veneration of eternity about it—"For his goings forth were of old, even from everlasting"—yet to men who know him not Christianity seems to be but a young upstart, audaciously contending with hoary-headed systems of religion. Ay, but the day shall come when men shall bow before the name of Christ, when the cross shall command universal homage, when the name of Jesus shall stay the wandering Arab and make him prostrate his knee at the hour of prayer, when the voice of the minister of Christ shall be as mighty as that of a king, when the bishops of Christ's church shall be as princes in our midst, and when the sons and daughters of Zion shall be every man of them a prince, and every daughter a queen. The hour cometh, yea, and now draweth nigh, when the mountain of the Lord's house in her awful grandeur shall be established on the top of the mountains.

There is yet, however, a deeper and larger meaning. It is just this—that the day is coming when the church of God shall have *absolute supremacy*. The church of Christ now has to fight for her existence. She hath many foes, and mighty ones too, who would snatch the chaplet from her brow, blunt her sword, and stain her banners in the dust; but the day shall come when all her enemies shall die; there shall not be a dog to move his tongue against her. she shall be so mighty that there shall be nought left to compete with her. As for Rome, you shall seek but find it not. It shall be hurled like a millstone in the flood. As for Mahomed's lustful superstition, they shall ask for it, but the imposter shall not be found. As for false gods, talk to the bittern and the owl, to the mole, and to the bat, and they shall tell you where they shall be discovered. The church of Christ at that time shall not have kings of the earth to bind her, and to control her, as if she were but a puny thing, nor shall she have them to persecute her and lift up their iron arm to crush her; but she, then, shall be the queen and empress of all nations; she shall reign over all kings; they shall bow down and lick the dust of her feet; her golden sandals shall tread upon their necks; she, with her scepter, with her rod of iron, shall break empires in pieces like earthen vessels. She shall say, "Overturn! overturn! overturn! until he come, whose right it is; and I will give it HIM" The destiny of the church is universal monarchy. What Alexander fought for, what Ceasar died to obtain, what Napoleon wasted an his life to achieve, that Christ shall have:—the universal monarchy of the broad acres of the earth. "The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land." The whole earth shall come, and worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker; for every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You have now, I think, the meaning of the text,—the church growing and rising up till she becomes conspicuous, venerable, and supreme. And now let me pause here a moment, to ask how this is to be done.

How is this to be done? I reply, there are three things which will ensure the growth of the church. The first is the individual exertion of every Christian. I do not think that all the exertions of the church of Christ will ever be able to reach the climax of our text. I think we shall see something more than natural agency, even though employed by the Spirit, before the church of Christ shall be exalted to that supremacy of which I have spoken; but, nevertheless, this is to contribute to it. In the olden times, when men raised cairns to the memory of departed kings, it was usual to put a heap of stones over the tomb, and every passer-by threw another stone. In course of age. those

mounds grew into small hills. Now the church of Christ in the present day is growing something in that way. Each Christian converted to Christ throws his stone; we each do our measure. By the grace of God let us each make sure of one stone being deposited there, and strive to add another by laboring to be the instruments of bringing someone else to Christ; in this way the church will grow; and as year after year rolls on, each Christian serving his Master, the church will increase; and it shall come to pass in the last times, that even by the efforts of Christ's people, owned by God the Holy Spirit, this mountain shall be highly exalted in the midst of the hills.

This however, although all that we can do, is not, I think, all that we have to expect. We can *do* no more, but we may *expect* more. Besides, the church of Christ differs from all other mountains in this:—that she has within her a living influence. The ancients fabled that under Mount Etna, Vulcan was buried. Some great giant, they thought, lay there entombed; and when he rolled over and over, the earth began to tremble, and the mountains shook, and fire poured forth. We believe not the fable, but the church of God, verily, is like this living mountain. Christ seems to be buried within her; and when he moves himself his church rises with him. Once he was prostrate in the garden; then Zion was but a little hill; then he rose, and day-by-day as he is lifted up his church rises with him; and in the day when he shall stand on Mount Zion, then shall his church be elevated to her utmost height. The feet is, that the church, though a mountain, is a volcano—not one that spouts fire, but that hath fire within her; and this inward fire of living truth, and living grace, makes her bulge out, expands her side, and lifts her crest, and onwards she must tower, for truth is mighty, and it must prevail—grace is mighty, and must conquer—Christ is mighty, and he must be King of kings. Thus you see that there is something more than the individual exertions of the church; there is a something within her that must make her expand and grow, till she overtops the highest mountains,

But mark you, the great hope of the church, although it is reckoned madness by some to say it, is the second advent of Christ. When he shall come, then shall the mountain of the Lord's house be exalted above the hills. We know not when Jesus may come. All the prophets of modern times have only been prophets from the fact that they have made profit by their speculations; but with the solitary exception of that pun upon the word, I believe they have not the slightest claim upon your credit; not even men who are doctors of divinity, who can spoil an abundance of paper with their prophesies of second Adventism; “Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of God.” Christ may come this morning; while I am addressing you Christ may suddenly appear in the clouds of heaven. he may not come for many a weary age. but come he must; in the last days he must appear; and when Christ shall come he will make short work of that which is so long a labor to his church. His appearance will immediately convert the Jews. They have looked for Messiah a king. there he is, in more than regal splendor. They shall see him. they shall believe on him; he will then tell them that he is the Messiah whom their fathers crucified. Then will they look on him whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for their sin, and gathering round their great Messiah in glorious march they shall enter and be settled in their own land. They shall once more become a great and mighty nation, nay, a Jew shall become a very prince among men, firstborn in the church of God. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be converted and all kindreds and people shall serve the Son of David. Mark, the church is to rise first, and when the church has risen to eminence and greatness, the nations will flow unto her. Her rising will not be owing to the nations, but to the advent of Christ, and after she has become great, conspicuous, and supreme, then will the nations flow to her. I am looking for the advent of Christ, it is this that cheers me in the battle of

life—the battle and cause of Christ. I look for Christ to come, somewhat as John Bunyan described the battle of Captain Credence with Diabolus. The inhabitants of the town of Mansoul fought hard to protect their city from the prince of darkness, and at last a pitch battle was fought outside the walls. The captains and the brave men of arms fought all day till their swords were knitted to their hands with blood; many and many a weary hour did they seek to drive back the Diabolians. The battle seemed to waver in the balance, sometimes victory was on the side of faith, and anon, triumph seemed to hover over the crest of the prince of hell; but just as the sun was setting, trumpets were heard in the distance, Prince Emmanuel was coming, with trumpets sounding, and with banners flying, and while the men of mansoul passed onwards sword in hand, Emmanuel attacked their foes in the rear, and getting the enemy between them twain, they went on, driving their enemies at the swords point, till at last, trampling over their dead bodies, they met, and hand to hand the victorious church saluted its victorious Lord. Even so must it be. We must fight on day-by-day and hour-by-hour; and when we think the battle is almost decided against us, we shall hear the trump of the archangel, and the voice of God, and he shall come, the Prince of the kings of the earth: at his name, with terror they shall melt, and like snow driven before the wind from the bare side of Salmon shall they fly away; and we, the church militant, trampling over them, shall salute our Lord, shouting, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.” Thus then, have I explained the first part of the text.

II. The second part of the text we have to consider, is this sentence—“AND ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT.” Here is a figure, perhaps not so sublime, but quite as beautiful as the first. Still endeavor to retain in your minds the picture of this stupendous mountain, reaching above the clouds, seen by all mankind, in either hemisphere, a wonder of nature which could not be accomplished by the ordinary rules of art, but which divine wisdom will be able to perform. Well, wonder of wonders, you see all the nations of the earth converging to this great mountain, as to a common center. Once in the year all the people of Israel were wont to go to the little hill of Zion; and now, once for all, you see, not Israel, but all the nations of the earth coming to this great hill of Zion, to worship the Most High God. The white sails are on the Atlantic, and the ships are ‘dying before the wind, even as the bird flitteth through the sky. What bear they? What is their noble cargo? Lo! they come from far, bringing the sons and daughters of Zion from the ends of the earth. See you there the camel and the dromedary, the great caravan passing over the pathless desert? What are these and what is their costly freight? Lo they are bringing the daughters of God, and the sons of Zion up to the Most High God, to worship him. From all parts of the earth you see them coming—from the freezing cold and from the burning heat, from the far-off islands of the sea, and from the barren sands they come; they come, all converging towards the great center of their high and holy worship. This we are not to understand of course, literally, but as a figure of the great spiritual fact that all the souls of men shall tend to Christ, and to union with his church.

Again, I beg you carefully to observe the figure. It does not say they shall come to it, but they shall “*flow* unto it.” Understand the metaphor. It implies first their number. *Now* our churches are increased, converts drop into the churches; drop after drop the pool is filled. But in those days they shall flow into it; now it is but the pouring out of water from the bucket; then it shall be as the rolling of the cataract from the hillside, it shall flow into it. Now our converts, however numerous, are comparatively few, but then a nation shall be born in a day. The people shall renounce their gods at once. Whole nations shall of a sudden by an irresistible impulse flow into the church, not one by one, but in one vast mass. The power of God shall be seen in bringing whole nations into

the church of God. You have seen the river flowing onward to the sea, with its banks all swollen, bearing its enormous contribution to the boundless ocean. So shall it be in the last days; each nation shall be like a river, rolling towards the foot of this great mountain, the church of the living God. Happy, happy, happy day, when India and China with their teeming myriads, and all the nations of the earth, with their multitude of tongues, shall flow into the mountain of God!

But the text conveys the idea not only of numbers, but of—(I know the exact word, but then I do not like to use it, for fear some should not know the meaning of it, it means that the nations of the earth shall come willingly to it)—*spontaneity*. That was the word I wanted to use; but wherefore should we use big words; when we might find little ones. They are to come willingly to Christ; not to be driven, not to be pumped up, not to be forced to it, but to be brought up by the word of the Lord, to pay him willing homage; they are to flow to it. Just as the river naturally flows down-hill by no other force than that which is its nature, so shall the grace of God be so mightily given to the sons of men, that no acts of parliament, no state churches, no armies will be used to make a forced conversion. “The nations shall flow unto it.” Of themselves, made willing in the day of God’s power, they shall flow to it. Whenever the church of God is increased by unwilling converts it loses strength; whenever men join the church because of oppression, which would drive them to make a profession of religion, they do not flow, the church is weakened, end not strengthened, but in those days the converts shall be voluntarily won—shall come in willingly by divine grace; they shall flow unto it.

But yet again, this represents the *power* of the work of conversion. They “shall flow to it.” Imagine an idiot endeavoring to stop the river Thames. He gets for himself a boat, and there he stands, endeavoring to push back the stream. He objects to it flowing towards the sea. and with his hands he tries to put it back. Would you not soon hear laughter along the banks? Ah, fool, to attempt to stop the stream! Now, the word “flow,” here conveys just the idea. “The nations shall flow unto it.” The Secularist may rise up and say, “Oh, why be converted to this fanatical religion? Look to the things of time.” The false priests may rouse themselves with all their anger to defy Christ, and endeavor to keep their slaves; but all their attempts to stop conversion will be like an idiot seeking to drive back a mighty stream with his puny hands. “All nations shall flow unto it.” What an idea it is! Oh, take your stand to-day, like prophets of the Lord, and look into the future. To day the church appears like the dry bed of a torrent; here I stand, and I see a little water flowing in a secret and thread-like stream, amongst the stones. So little is it that I can scarcely detect it, but I take the glass of prophecy, I look far onward, and I see a rolling mass of water, such as is sometimes seen in the rapid rivers of Africa; and there it is, coming with thundering sound. Wait for a few more years, and that torrent, like Kishon’s mighty river, sweeping all before it, shall fill this dry bed, and swell on, and on, and on, with tumultuous waves of joy, till it meets the ocean of Christ’s universal reign, and loses itself in God. Here you see, then, you have more than your imagination can grasp. This stupendous mountain, and all the nations of the earth—vast numbers with immense force—spontaneously coming up to the house of the living God.

Now, I shall close by a practical address, very brief, and I trust very earnest. Is it not a great subject for praise that the nations of the earth *may flow* to the hill of God and to his house? If I were to tell you that all the nations of Europe were climbing the sides of the Alps, you would ask me, “And what benefit do they gain thereby? They must pass over the slippery fields of ice and they may lose their lives in the midst of the bottomless chasms that are overhung by the mighty precipices; they may suddenly be overwhelmed and buried in the all-destroying avalanche, and should they

reach the summit they must fall down exhausted. What is there that men should covet in those barren heights; rarefied air and cold would soon destroy them, should they attempt to exist there.” Ah, but it is not so with God’s hill. There shall be no snow upon its summit, but the warmth and light of Jehovah’s love, there shall be no chasms in its side wherein souls may be destroyed, for there shall be a way, and a highway, (the unclean shall not pass over it) a way so easy that the wayfaring man shall not err therein.

The mountains of which we read in Scripture were some of them such, that if they were accessible no one would desire to climb them. There were bounds set round about Sinai, but had there been no bounds who would have wished to ascend it? A mountain that burned with fire, and upon which there was a sound as of a trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long. No, brethren, we are not come to a mountain like Sinai with its supernatural thunders; we are not come to a hill bare, and barren, and bleak, and difficult to climb, like the mountains of earth; but the hill of God, though it is a high hill, is a hill up which on hands and knees the humble penitent may readily ascend. Ye are come to a mountain which is not forbidden to you. there are no bounds set about it to keep you off, but you are freely bidden and freely invited to come to it. And the God who invited you will give you grace to come. If he has given you the will to come, he will give you grace to climb the sides of the hill, till you shall reach its upper glories, and stand on its summit transported with delight. While I am talking about the nations that will flow to Christ, might we not weep to think that there are so many in this congregation that are not flowing to Christ but are going *from* him? Ah! soul; what are the splendours of the Millennium to thee, if thou art his enemy? For when he tramples his foes in his hot displeasure, thy blood shall stain his garments, even as the garments of the wine-pressers are stained with the blood of the grape. Tremble, sinner, for the advent of Christ must be thy destruction though it shall be the church’s Joy and comfort. Ye say, “Come quickly.” Know ye not that to you the day of the Lord is darkness and not light, for that day burneth as an oven, and they that are proud and do wickedly shall be as stubble, and the fire shall consume them with burning heat. Oh! ye people that to-day hear the words of Jesus! ye are now this day invited to come to the mountain of his church, on which stands his cross and his throne. Ye weary, heavy laden, sin-destroyed sin-ruined souls, ye that know and feel your need of Jesus ye that weep because of sin, ye are bidden to come now to Christ’s cross. to look to him who shed his blood for the ungodly, and looking to him, you shall find peace and rest; so that when he cometh with rainbow wreath, and robes of storm, you shall be able to see him, not with alarm and terror, but with joy and gladness. for you shall say, “Here he is, the man who died for me has come to claim me, he who bought me has come to receive me; my judge is my Redeemer, and I will rejoice in him.” Oh! turn ye, ye English heathens—turn ye unto God! ye inhabitants of London, some of you as vile as the inhabitants of Sodom. turn ye, turn ye to God! O Lord Jesus! by thy grace turn every one of us to thyself! Bring in thine elect; let thy redeemed rejoice in thee; and then let the fullness of the nations flow unto then, and thine shall be the glory, for ever and ever.

Just published, 32mo., in a neat wrapper, price 1d.,

“A TOKEN FOR THE BEREAVED;” by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON.

War! War! War!

A Sermon

(No. 250)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 1st, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Fight the Lord’s battles.”—1 Samuel 18:17.

WE shall not take these words in their literal application, as coming from the lips of Saul, when he gave David his elder daughter, Merab, to wife; but shall accommodate the passage, and use it as an exhortation given to the church of Christ, and to every Soldier of Jesus: “Fight the Lord’s battles.” If this exhortation be not found in the selfsame words, coming from the lips of Jesus, nevertheless the whole tenor of the Word of God is to the same effect—“Fight the Lord’s battles.”

At the present crisis, the minds of men are exceedingly agitated with direful prospects of a terrible struggle. We know not whereunto this matter may grow. The signs of the times are dark and direful. We fear that the vials of God’s wrath are about to be poured out, and that the earth will be deluged with blood. As long as there remains a hope, let us pray for peace, nay, even in the time of war let us still beseech the throne of God, crying, that he would “send us peace in our days.”

The war will be looked upon by different persons with different feelings. The Italian will consider, all through the controversy, his own country; the Sardinian will be looking continually to the progress or to the defeat of his own nation; while the German, having sympathy with his own race, will be continually anxious to understand the state of affairs. There is one power however, which is not represented in the congress and which seems to be silent, because the ears of men are deaf to aught that it hath to say. To that power all *our* sympathies will be given, and *our* hearts will follow it with interest; and all through the war, the one question that we shall ask, will be “How will *that* kingdom prosper? “You all know to which kingdom I refer—it is the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth; that little one which is even at this time growing, and which is to become a thousand, which is to break in pieces all the monarchies of earth, and to seat itself upon their ruins, proclaiming universal liberty and peace, under the banner of Jesus Christ. I am sure that we shall think far more of the interests of religion than of anything else, and our prayer will be, “O Lord, do what thou wilt with the earthen pitchers of men’s monarchies, but let thy kingdom come, and let thy will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven!”

While, however, we shall anxiously watch the contest, it will be quite as well if we mingle in it ourselves. Not that this nation of England should touch it; God forbid. If tyrants fight, let them fight; let free men stand aloof. Why should England have aught to do with all the coming battles? As God has cut us off from Europe by a boisterous sea, so let us be kept apart from all the broils and turmoils into which tyrants and their slaves may fall. I speak now, after a spiritual manner, to the church of Christ. I say, “Let *us* mingle in the fray; let us have something to do. *We* cannot be neutral; we never have been. Our host is ever in hostility to sin and Satan. “My voice is still for war.” The senate of Christ’s church can never talk of peace. For thus it is written: “The Lord will have war.”

This will bring us to the text, and here I shall consider first of all, *the Lord's battles*; we are not to fight our own; secondly, *the Lord's soldiers*; and thirdly, *the King's command*, "Fight the Lord's battles."

I. First, THE LORD'S BATTLES, what are they? Not the garment rolled in blood, not the noise, and smoke, and din of human slaughter. These may be the devil's battles, if you please, but not the Lord's. They may be days of God's vengeance but in their strife the servant of Jesus may not mingle. We stand aloof. Our kingdom is not of this world; else would God's servants fight with sword and spear. Ours is a spiritual kingdom, and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.

What are God's battles? Let us here carefully distinguish between the battles of God, and our own. Oh, my brethren and sisters in Christ, it is not your business to fight your own battles, not even in defense of your own character. If you be maligned and slandered, let the slanderer alone. His malignity will but be increased by any attempt that you shall make to defend yourself. As a soldier of Christ you are to fight for your Master, not for yourself. You are not to carry on a private warfare for your own honor, but all your time and all your power is to be given to his defense and his war. You are not to have a word to speak for yourselves. Full often, when we get into little tempers, and our blood is roused, we are apt to think that we are fighting the cause of truth, when we are really maintaining our own pride. We imagine that we are defending our Master, but we are defending our own little selves. Too often the anger rises against an adversary not because his words reflect dishonor upon the glorious Christ, but because they dishonor us. Oh! let us not be so little as to fight our own battles! Depend upon it, the noblest means of conquest for a Christian in the matter of calumny and falsehood, is to stand still and see the salvation of God. Sheathe thine own sword, put away all thine own weapons, when thou comest to fight thine own battle, and let God fight for thee, and thou shalt be more than conqueror.

Again, we must recollect that there is such a thing as fighting the battles of our own sect, when we ought to be fighting *God's* battles. We imagine that we are maintaining the church when we are only maintaining our section of it. I would always be very tender of the honor of the Christian body to which I belong, but I would rather see *its* honor stained, than that the glory of the entire church should be dimmed. Every soldier ought to love the peculiar legion in which he has enlisted, but better to see the colors of that legion rent to tatters, than to see the old standard of the cross trampled in the mire. Now I trust we are ready to say of our own denomination, Let its name perish, if Christ's name shall get ought of glory thereby." If the extinction of our sect should be the conquest of Christ and the promoting of his kingdom, then let it be wiped out of the book of record, and let not its name be heard any more. We should, I say, each of us defend the body to which we belong, for we have conscientiously joined it believing it to be the nearest to the old standard of the church of Christ, and God forbid that we should leave it for a worse. If we see a better, then would we sacrifice our prejudices to our convictions, but we cannot leave the old standard so long as we see it to be the very standard which floated in the hand of Paul, and which was handed by him through divers generations, through Chrysostom to Augustine, from Augustine to Calvin, and so on through the glorious race of mighty men who have not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ Jesus. But yet I say let our name. and let our sect, and let our denomination be absorbed, and let it sink, so that the battle of the Lord may but be well fought, and the time of Christ's triumph hastened.

“Fight the *Lord’s* battles.” Then what are these? These are battles with sin and battles with error, and battles with war, and battles with worldliness. Fight ye these Christian. and ye shall have enough to do.

The Lord’s battle is first of all with *sin*. Seek grace to fight that battle in your own heart. Endeavour by divine grace to overcome those propensities which continually push you towards iniquity. On your knees wrestle against your besetting sins. As habits appear endeavor to break them by the battle-axe of strong resolution wielded by the arm of faith. Take all your lusts as they bestir themselves to the foot of the cross, and let the blood of Jesus fall upon those vipers and they must die. The blood of Christ shall spill the blood of sin. The death of Christ shall be the death of iniquity, the cross of Christ shall be the crucifixion of transgression. Labour with yourselves to drive the Canaanites out of your hearts. Spare none, let no petty lust escape. Put down pride and sloth, and lust, and unbelief and you have now a battle before you which may fill your hands, and more than fill them. Oh! cry unto God your strength, and look unto the hills from whence cometh your help, and then fight on again, and as each sin is overcome, each evil habit broken off, each lust denied go on to the rooting up of another, and the destruction of more of them, until ail being subdued, body soul and spirit shall be consecrated to Christ as a living sacrifice, purified by his Holy Spirit.

And while this battle is being fought, ay, and while it is still fighting, go out and fight with other men’s sins. Smite them first with the weapon of holy example. Be yourselves what you would have others be. be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Be yourselves clean ere ye can hope to be the purifiers of the world; and then, having first sought the blessing of God, go out into the world and bear your witness against sin. Let your testimony be unflinching; never let a sin pass under your eye without rebuke. Slay utterly young and old; let not one escape. Speak sometimes sternly if the sinner be hardened in his sin, speak gently, if it be his first offense, seeking not to break *his* head but to break the head of his iniquity—not to break his bones or wound his feelings, but to cut his sin in twain, and leave his iniquity dead before his eyes. Go ye forth where sin is the most rampant. Go down the dark alley, climb the creaking staircase; penetrate the dens of iniquity where the lion of the pit lies in his death lair, and go ye and pluck out of the mouth of the lion two legs and a piece of a ear, if that be all which you can save. Count it always your joy to follow the track of the lion, to beard him in his den, and fight him where he reigneth most secure. Protest daily, hourly, by act, by word, by pen, by tongue, against evil of every kind and shape. Be ye as burning and shining lights in the midst of darkness, and as two-edged swords in the midst of the hosts of sin. Why, a true Christian who lives near to God, and is filled with grace and is kept holy, may stand in the midst of sinners and do wonders. What a marvellous feat was that which Jonah did! There was the great city of Nineveh, having in it six score thousand souls that knew not their right hand from their left, and one man went against it—Jonah—and as he approached it he began to cry, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” He entered the city—perhaps he stood aghast for a moment at the multitude of its population, at its richness and splendor, but again he lilted up his sharp shrill voice, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” On he went, and the crowd increased around him as he passed through each street, but they heard nothing but the solemn monotony, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown;” and yet again, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” And on he went, that solitary man, till he caused convulsion in the midst of myriads, and the king on his throne robed himself in sackcloth and proclaimed a fast, a day of mourning and of sadness. Yet on he went, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be

overthrown," "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," till all the people bowed before him, and that one man was the conqueror of the myriad. Ah! believer, if you will go out and do the same, if you will go into the streets, the lanes, the by-ways the houses, and into the privacies of men, and still with this continued cry against sin and iniquity, say to them, "Look unto the cross and live, look unto the cross and live." Though there were but one earnest man in London who would continue that monotony of "Look unto the cross and live," from end to end this city would shake, and the great leviathan metropolis would be made to tremble. Go forth then, believer, and cry against sin with all thy might.

And even so must we cry against *error*. It is the preacher's business Sabbath after Sabbath, and week-day after week-day, to preach the whole gospel of God and to vindicate the truth as it is in Jesus from the opposition of man. Thousands are the heresies which now beset the church. O children of God! fight the Lord's battles for truth. I am astonished, and yet more astonished when I come to turn it over, at the want of earnestness that there is in the Protestantism of the present age. How do you imagine that Cardinal Wiseman pays for all his splendours, and that the Romish church is supported? Fools and slow of heart, ye find them much of their wealth. If he is to preach in any place, who is it that crowds the chapel full, and pays for admission? The Protestants; and the Protestantism of England is the pay-master of the Pope. I am ashamed that sons of the Reformers who have Smithfield still in their midst unbuilt upon, should bow themselves before the beast, and give so much as a single farthing to the shrine of the devil's firstborn son Take heed to yourselves, ye Protestants, lest ye be partakers of her plagues; touch her not, lest ye be defiled. Give a drachm to her, or a grain of incense to her censors, ye shall be partakers of her adulteries and partakers of her plagues. Every time you pass the house of Popery let a curse light upon her head: Thus saith the Lord:—"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."—Revelation 18:4-8. How soft some men's minds are growing how effeminate in the battle. I hear then speaking of Puseyism,—and what is that but Popery made worse than it was before by being more despicable and deceivable than even Popery itself. Do ye not hear men talk of the Puseyites in these days and say, "Ah! well, they differ a little from us." Do not the evangelical party in the Church of England seem at the present moment to make common cause and party with the Puseyite? Else how is it that the great preachings have been alternatively conducted by High and Low Church? It is all very well with that Church when it is separated from her heretical sons, and a great gulf fixed, but all that helps to bridge that gulf must mar her glory and destroy her power. We must have no truce, no treaty with Rome. War! war to the knife with her! Peace there cannot be. She cannot have peace with us—we cannot have peace with her. She hates the true Church, and we can only say that the hatred is reciprocated. We would not lay a hand upon her priests; we would not touch a hair of their heads. Let them be free; but their doctrine we would destroy from the face of the earth as the doctrine of devils. So let it perish, O God, and let that evil thing become as the fat of lambs. Into smoke let it consume: yea into smoke let it consume away.

We must fight the Lord's battles against this giant error, whichever shape it takes; and so must we do with every error that pollutes the church. Slay it utterly; let none escape. "Fight the Lord's battles." Even though it be an error that is in an Evangelical Church, yet must we smite it. I love all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, but, nevertheless, I cannot have any truce any treaty with divers errors that have crept into the church, nor would I have you regard them with complacency. We are one in Christ; let us be friends with one another; but let us never be friends with one another's error. If I be wrong, rebuke me sternly; I can bear it, and bear it cheerfully and if ye be wrong, expect the like measure from me, and neither peace nor parley with your mistakes. Let us all be true to one another, and true to Christ; and as soon as we perceive an error, though it be but as the shadow of one, let us root it out and drive it from us, lest it plague the whole body, and put leprosy into the entire fabric of the church. No peace with sin. no peace with falsehood. War, war, war without deliberation: war for ever with error and deceit!

And yet again, it is the Christian's duty always to have war with *war*. To have bitterness in our hearts against any *man* that lives is to serve Satan. We must speak very hardly and sternly against error, and against sin; but against men we have not a word to say, though it were the Pope himself: I have no enmity in my heart against him as a man, but as *anti-Christ*. With men the Christian is one. Are we not every man's brother? "God hath made of one flesh all people that dwell upon the face of the earth." The cause of Christ is the cause of humanity. We are friends to all, and are enemies to none. We do not speak evil, even of the false prophet himself; as a man, but, as a false prophet. we are his sworn opponents. Now, Christians, ye have a difficult battle to fight, because ye fight with all evil and hostility between man and man: you are to be peacemakers. Go wherever you may, if you see a quarrel you are to abate it. You are to pluck firebrands out of the fire, and strive to quench them in the waters of lovingkindness. It is your mission to bring the nations together, and weld them into one. It is yours to make man love man, to make him no more the devourer of his kind. This you can only do by being the friends of purity. Peace with error is war with man: but war with error is peace with man. Smite error, smite sin, and you have done your best to promote happiness and union among mankind. Oh, go, Christian, in the Spirit's strength, and smite your own anger—put that to the death, smite your own pride—level that, and then smite every other man's anger. Make peace wherever you can; scatter peace with both your hands. Let this be the very air you breathe; let nothing drop from your lip but words of healing, words of tenderness, words which shall abate the strife and noise of this poor distracted world. And now you have a battle before you,—a battle against sin and against error, and then, also, a battle against strife,—the battle of love.

II. And now FOR THE LORD'S SOLDIERS: who are they that are to fight the Lord's battle? Not everybody. The Lord has his army, his church: who are they? The Lord's soldiers are all of his own choosing. He has chosen them out of the world; and they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. But if you want to know the Lord's soldiers, I will tell you how you may ascertain whether you are one. When the Lord Jesus enlists a soldier in his church, the first thing he does with him is, he tells him that he must first take off every rag of the old garments that he was wont to wear. "Now," saith Jesus to him, "thy rags must be relinquished; thy sins and thy self-righteousness must both be forsaken. Here is the regimental, here is the inner garment of my imputed righteousness, and here is the outward garment of divine sanctification. Put on these, and thou art mine. But in thine own robes, I will have nothing to do with thee, thou shalt still continue an heir of wrath, and I will not enlist thee among the heirs of grace." As soon as a man has his rags

taken off, it Christ has enlisted him, the next thing he is required to do is, to wash. He is washed, from head to foot, in a matchless bath of blood; and when washed, he is arrayed, and clothed upon with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This done, he is taken into the midst of the army and introduced to his comrades, and he is led to love the whole army. "Well," says one, "I love my own rank." Do you? Then you do not belong to it, if you do not love the other ranks too. He who is a true soldier of Christ, wears his regimentals, and he loves the whole army. He keeps to his own regiment, and he likes its banner—the flag that has braved so often the battle and the storm; still he loves the whole army, however much the colors may differ. He loves all them that serve the Lord Jesus Christ. "By this also ye shall know whether ye be his disciples, if ye love one another, even as Christ has loved you."

Once brought into the army, there is one mark whereby you may know Christ's soldier, namely, that he is not his own. If you meet him, he will say, "From head to foot I belong to my Captain, every inch of me; and what is more, I have given up goods and chattels, wife and children, time and talents, everything to him. I am not my own, I am bought with a price." He is a consecrated man. Come, then, put these questions to yourselves. Have you been washed in the blood of Christ? Do you boast in the imputed righteousness of Christ? And are you clothed about with the sanctification of his Spirit? Have you given up everything for his cause, and for the love you bear his name are you willing to live or willing to die, as he shall please, if you may but promote his honor? Well, then, you are his soldier, and therefore I shall not need to draw any further lines of distinction; but go to the third point, which is—

III. THE EXHORTATION—"Fight!" "Fight the Lord's battles." If you are the soldier of the heavenly King; "To arms! to arms!" "Fight the Lord's battles."

Here I would observe, that there are some people who are very fond of looking on, and not fighting. Perhaps five out of every six of our church do little but look on. You go to see them, and you say, "Well, what is your church doing?" "Well, we bless God, we are doing a great deal; we have a Sabbath-school, with so many children; our minister preaches so many times, and so many members have been added to the churches. The sick are visited; the poor are relieved." And you stop them, and say, "Well, friend, I am glad to hear that you are doing so much; but which work is it that you take? Do you teach in the Sabbath school?" "No." "Do you preach in the street?" "No." "Do you visit the sick?" "No." "Do you assist in the discipline of the church?" "No." "Do you contribute to the poor?" "No." Yet I thought you said you were doing so much. Stand out, sir, if you please, you are doing nothing at all. Be ashamed! Your master does not say, "Look on at the Lord's battles;" but "Fight" them. "Ah," says one. "but then, you know, I contribute towards the support of the ministers he has to do that." Oh! I see, you have made a mistake; you thought that you belonged to the English government, and not to Christ's government. You have been paying for a substitute, have you? You are not going to fight in person; you are paying, to keep a substitute to fight for you. Ah, ye have made a great mistake here. Christ will have all his soldiers fight. Why, I am not kept to do the fighting for you: I wilt endeavor to encourage you, and nerve you to the battle; but as to doing your duty, no, I thank you. The Romanist may believe that his priest does the work for him; I do not believe any such thing in my case, nor in the case of your ministers. Christ did not serve you by proxy, and you cannot serve him by proxy. No, "he his own self bare our sins in his own body," and you must work for Christ in your own body, your own self, with your own heart and with your own hands. I do hate that religion which another man can do for you. Depend upon it, it is good for nothing. True religion is a personal thing. O soldiers of the heavenly

King, leave not our lieutenants and your officers to fight alone. Come on with us; we wave our swords in front. Come comrades, on! we are ready to mount the call, or lead the forlorn hope. Will you desert us? Come up the ladder with us. Let us show the enemy what Christian blood can do, and at the sword's point let us drive our foes before us. If you leave us to do all it will all be undone; we want all to do something, all to be laboring for Christ. Here, then, is the exhortation to each individual Christian—"Fight the Lord's battles."

And now, I will read you over the code martial—the rules which Christ, the Captain, would have you obey in fighting his battles.

Regulation I.—NO COMMUNICATION NOR UNION WITH THE ENEMY!

"Ye are not of the world." No truce, no league, no treaty, are you to make with the enemies of Christ. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing."

Regulation II.—NO QUARTER TO BE GIVEN OR TAKEN!

You are not to say to the world, "There! believe me to be better than I am"—and do not ever believe the world to be better than it is? Do not ask it to excuse you; do not excuse it. No parley with it whatever. If it praises you, do not care for its praise; if it scorns you laugh in its face. Have nought to do with its pretended friendship. Ask nothing at its hands; let it be crucified to you, and you to it.

Regulation III.—NO WEAPONS OR AMMUNITION TAKEN FROM THE ENEMY ARE TO BE USED BY IMMANUEL'S SOLDIERS, BUT ARE TO BE UTTERLY BURNED WITH FIRE!

If you beat them, and you find their guns lying on the ground, spike them and melt them; never fire them off:—that is to say, never fight Christ's battles with the devil's weapons. If your enemy gets angry do not get angry with him; if he slanders you, do not slander him. One of the devil's long guns is slander: spike it and melt it; do not attempt to use it against the enemy. All kinds of bitterness—these are firebrands of death which Satan hurls against us: never hurl them back at him. Remember you Master. "When he was reviled he reviled not again." Never meddle with the enemy's weapons, even if you can. If you think you can crush him by his own mode of warfare, do not do it. It was all very well for David to cut off Goliath's head with his own sword; but it would not have done for him to try that, until he had first of all split his head open with a stone. Try to get a stone out of the brook of truth, and throw it with the sling of faith, but have nothing to do with Goliath's sword; you will cut your fingers with it, and get no honor.

Regulation IV.—NO FEAR, TREMBLING, OR COWARDICE!

"The children of Ephraim, being armed, turned their backs in the day of battles" but Christ wants no cowardice of you. Fear not. Remember, if any man be ashamed of Christ in this generation, of him will Christ be ashamed in the day when he comes in the glory of his Father and all his holy angels. "I say unto you, fear not him that can kill the body, but after that hath no more that he can do; but fear him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell; I say unto you, fear him."

Regulation V.—NO SLUMBERING, REST, EASE, OR SURRENDER!

Be always at it, all at it, constantly at it, with all your might at it. No rest. Your resting time is to come, in the grave. Be always fighting the enemy. Ask every day for grace to win a victory, and each night sleep not unless you can feel that you have done something in the cause of Christ—have helped to carry the standard a little further into the midst of the enemy's ranks. Oh! if we did but attend to these regulations how much might be done! But because we forget them, the cause of Christ is retarded and the victory is along.

And now, before I send you away, I would call out Christ's soldiers, and drill them for a minute or two. I see sometimes the captains marching their soldiers to and fro, and you may laugh and say they are doing nothing; but mark, all that manoeuvring, that forming into squares, and so forth, has its practical effect when they come into the field of battle. Suffer me, then, to put the Christian through his postures.

The first posture the Christian ought to take, and in which he ought to be very well practiced, is this. **DOWN UPON BOTH KNEES, HANDS UP, AND EYES UP TO HEAVEN!** No posture like that. It is called the posture of prayer. When Christ's church has been beaten every way else, it has at last taken to its knees, and then the whole army of the enemy has fled before us, for on its knees Christ's church is more than conqueror. The praying legion is a legion of heroes. He who understands this posture has learned the first part of the heavenly drill.

The next posture is: **FEET FAST, HANDS STILL, AND EYES UP!** A hard posture that, though it looks very easy. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." I have known many men who could practice the first position who could not practice the: second. Perhaps that was the hardest thing that the children of Israel ever did. When they had the sea before them and Pharaoh behind them, they were commanded to stand still. But if you must learn to stand still when you are provoked, to be silent when you are mocked, to wait under adverse providences, and still believe that in the darkest hour the sun is not dead, but will shine out again. Patient waiting for Christ's coming, may we all learn this.

Another posture is this: **QUICK MARCH, CONTINUALLY GOING ONWARD!** Ah! there are some Christians who are constantly sleeping on their guns; but they do not understand the posture of going onward. Quick march! Many Christians seem to be better skilled in the goose step of lifting up one foot after another and putting them down in the same place, rather than going onwards. Oh! I would we all knew how to progress—to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Never think you are doing anything unless you are getting forwarder—have more love, more hope, more joy, and are extending your sphere of usefulness. Soldiers of Christ, Quick march!" Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward." Let them not go back; let them not stand still. On, on, on, soldiers of Christ! Go forward!

Another posture is one that is very hard to learn indeed. It is what no soldier, I think, was ever told to do by his captain, except the soldier of Christ: **EYES SHUT, AND EARS SHUT, AND HEART SHUT!** That is when you go through Vanity Fair. Eyes shut, so as not to look upon temptation; ears shut, so as not to regard either the praise or the scoffs of the world; and heart shut against evil, with the great stone of precept. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Roll a stone at the door of your heart, that sin may not come out of it. That is a hard posture; but you will never fight the battles of the Lord till you know how to maintain that.

And then there is another posture: **FEET FIRM, SWORD IN HAND. EYES OPEN; LOOKING AT YOUR ENEMY, WATCHING EVERY FEINT THAT HE MAKES, AND WATCHING TOO YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO LET FLY AT HIM SWORD IN HAND!** That posture you must maintain every day. Guard against the darts of the enemy; hold up your shield, and be ready to run on him and give him a deadly wound. I need not explain that. You that have to do with business, you that are in the ministry, You that are serving God as deacons and elders, you know how often you have to ward off the dart and look well at your enemy, and meet him sword in hand, ready to rush in whenever your time shall come. Let no opportunity—let no occasion pass by. Wound your

enemy whenever you can; slay sin, slay error, and destroy bitterness, as often as ye have opportunity so to do.

There is one other posture, which is a very happy one for the child of God to take up and I would have you remember to-day. **HANDS WIDE OPEN, AND HEART WIDE OPEN, WHEN YOU ARE HELPING YOUR BRETHREN**, a hand ready to give whate'er the church needs, and an eye ready to look up for help when you cannot give help with your hand, and ready to guide the hand whenever help is wanting; and a heart open to hear the tale of another's want, to "rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep."

Above all, the best posture for Christ's church, is that of **PATIENT WAITING FOR THE ADVENT OF CHRIST**, a looking-forward for his glorious appearance, who must come and will not tarry, but who will get unto himself the victory.

Now, if you will go to your houses, and if divine grace shall help you to put yourselves through this form of drill, you will be mighty in the day of battle to put down the enemy.

And now suffer the word of exhortation, very brief, but hot and earnest. O Christian men and women, the more ye think of it the more will ye be ashamed of yourselves, and of the present church, that we do so little for Christ. Some eighteen hundred years ago, there were a handful of men and women in an upper room; and that handful! of men and women were so devoted to their master end so true to his cause, that within a hundred years they had overrun every nation of the habitable globe; yea, within fifty years they had preached the gospel in every land. And now look at this great host gathered here to-day. Probably there are not less than two or three thousand members of Christian churches, besides this mixed multitude and now what will you do in fifty years time? What does the church do in any year of its existence? Why, hardly anything at all. I sometimes wonder how long God will allow the church to be cooped up in England. I fear that we shall never see the world converted, till this country is invaded. If it should ever happen that our hearths and homes should be invaded, And that we should be scattered, north, south, east and west, all through the world, it will be the grandest thing that ever happened for the church of Christ. I would go down on my knees and pray night and day that it may not happen *for the nation's sake*; but nevertheless I sometimes think that the greatest disaster that can ever occur to our nation, will be the only way in which Christ's church will be spread. Look at it. Here you have your churches in almost every street, and despite the destitution of London, it is not destitute if you compare it with the nations of the world. Oh, ought we not as ministers of Christ to pour out in legions? and ought not our people to go everywhere in the habitable world, in ones, and twos, and threes, preaching the gospel? But would you have us leave wife, and house, and children? *I* would not have you do it; but if ye would do it then would Christ's power be seen, and then would the might of the church return to it once again. They were men without purse or scrip that went everywhere preaching the word, and God was with them, and the world heard them and was converted. Now we cannot go if we are not sent, and perhaps it is only reasonable that flesh and blood should not ask more. but still if the life of (hod were in the church, it would never stop in England long; it would send forth its bands and legions, rolling along in one tremendous stream; a new crusade would be preached against the heathen nations, and the sword of the Lord and of Gideon would smite the stoutest of our foemen, and Christ would reign, and his unsuffering kingdom then would come. Oh that the church had power with men, and power with God! Dear brothers and sisters, look out and see what you can do, every one of you. Do something to-day. Do not let this Sunday go without every one of you trying to be the means of winning a soul to God. Go to your Sunday

Schools this afternoon; go to your preaching stations; go to your tract district each one in his sphere; go to your families, your mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters; go home and do something to-day. "Fight the Lord's battles." You can do nothing of yourselves; but God will be with you. If you have the will to serve him, he will give you the power. Go today, and seek to heal some breach, to put away some enmity, to slay some sin, or to drive out some error; and God being with you this shall be a happier day to your soul, and a holier day to the world than you have seen in all your experience before.

I will have one blow, and then you may go. Sinner! I remember that thou art here this morning as well as the saint. Sinner! thou art not Christ's soldier; thou art a soldier of Satan; thou wilt have thy pay soon, man, when thou hast worn thy sword out, and worn thine arm out in fighting against Christ. Thou shalt have thy pay. Look at it and tremble. "The wages of sin is death," and damnation too. Will you take these two, or will you now renounce the black old tyrant, and enlist under the banner of Christ? O that God would give you the earnest money of free grace, and enlist you now as a soldier of the cross. Remember, Christ takes the very dregs to be his soldiers. Every man that was in debt, and every man that was discontented, came to David, and he became a captain over them. Now, if you are in debt this morning to God's law, and cannot pay, if you are discontented with the devil's service, jaded and worn out with pleasure, come to Christ, and he will receive you, make you a soldier of the cross, and a follower of the Lamb. God be with you and bless you, from this day forth, even for ever!

Just published, 32mo., in a neat wrapper, price 1d.,

"A TOKEN FOR THE BEREAVED;" by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON.

The Necessity of the Spirit's Work

A Sermon

(No. 251)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 8th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And I will put my Spirit within you.”—Ezekiel, 36:27.

The miracles of Christ are remarkable for one fact, namely that they are none of them unnecessary. The pretended miracles of Mahomet, and of the church of Rome, even if they had been miracles, would have been pieces of folly. Suppose that Saint Denis had walked with his head in his hand after it had been cut off, what practical purpose would have been subserved thereby? He would certainly have been quite as well in his grave, for any practical good he would have conferred on men. The miracles of Christ were never unnecessary. They are not freaks of power; they are displays of power it is true, but they all of them have a practical end. The same thing may be said of the promises of God. We have not one promise in the Scripture which may be regarded as a mere freak of grace. As every miracle was necessary, absolutely necessary, so is every promise that is given in the Word of God. And hence from the text that is before us, may I draw, and I think very conclusively, the argument, that if God in his covenant made with his people has promised to put his Spirit within them, it must be absolutely necessary that this promise should have been made, and it must be absolutely necessary also to our salvation that every one of us should receive the Spirit of God. This shall be the subject of this morning's discourse. I shall not hope to make it very interesting, except to those who are anxiously longing to know the way of salvation.

We start, then, by laying down this proposition—that the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us, if we would be saved.

I. In endeavoring to prove this, I would first of all make the remark that this is very manifest if we *remember what man is by nature*. Some say that man may of himself attain unto salvation—that if he hear the Word, it is in his power to receive it, to believe it, and to have a saving change worked in him by it. To this we reply, you do not know what man is by nature, otherwise you would never have ventured upon such an assertion. Holy Scripture tells us that man by nature is *dead* in trespasses and sins. It does not say that he is sick, that he is faint, that he has grown callous, and hardened, and seared, but it says he is absolutely dead. Whatever that term “death” means in connection with the body, that it means in connection with man's soul, viewing it in its relation to spiritual things. When the body is dead it is powerless; it is unable to do any thing for itself; and when the soul of man is dead, in a spiritual sense, it must be, if there is any meaning in the figure, utterly and entirely powerless, and unable to do any thing of itself or for itself. When ye shall see dead men raising themselves from their graves, when ye shall see them unwinding their own sheets, opening their own coffin-lids, and walking down our streets alive and animate, as the result of their own power, then perhaps ye may believe that souls that are dead in sin may turn to God, may recreate their own natures, and may make themselves heirs of heaven, though before they were heirs of wrath. But mark, *not till then*. The drift of the gospel is, that man is dead in sin, and that divine life is God's gift; and you must go contrary to the whole of that drift, before you can suppose a man brought to

know and love Christ, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit finds men as destitute of spiritual life as Ezekiel's dry bones; he brings bone to bone, and fits the skeleton together, and then he comes from the four winds and breathes into the slain, and they live, and stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army, and worship God. But apart from that, apart from the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God, men's souls must lie in the valley of dry bones, dead, and dead for ever.

But Scripture does not only tell us that man is dead in sin; it tells us something worse than this, namely, that he is utterly and entirely averse to every thing that is good and right. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."—Romans 8:7.—Turn you all Scripture through, and you find continually the will of man described as being contrary to the things of God. What said Christ in that text so often quoted by the Arminian to disprove the very doctrine which it clearly states? What did Christ say to those who imagined that men would come without divine influence? He said, first, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" but he said something more strong—"Ye *will not* come unto me that ye might have life." No man *will* come. Here lies the deadly mischief; not only that he is powerless to do good, but that he is powerful enough to do that which is wrong, and that his will is desperately set against every thing that is right. Go, Armenian, and tell your hearers that they will come if they please, but know that your Redeemer looks you in the face, and tells you that you are uttering a lie. Men *will not* come. They never will come of themselves. You cannot induce them to come; you cannot force them to come by all your thunders, nor can you entice them to come by all your invitations. They *will not* come unto Christ, that they may have life. Until the Spirit draw them, come they neither will, nor can.

Hence, then, from the fact that man's nature is hostile to the divine Spirit, that he hates grace, that he despises the way in which grace is brought to him, that it is contrary to his own proud nature to stoop to receive salvation by the deeds of another—hence it is necessary that the Spirit of God should operate to change the will, to correct the bias of the heart, to set man in a right track, and then give him strength to run in it. Oh! if ye read man and understand him, ye cannot help being sound on the point of the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work. It has been well remarked by a great writer, that he never knew a man who held any great theological error, who did not also hold a doctrine which diminished the depravity of man. The Armenian says man is fallen, it is true, but then he has power of will left, and that will is free; he can raise himself. He diminishes the desperate character of the fall of man. On the other hand, the Antinomian says, man cannot do any thing, but that he is not at all responsible, and is not bound to do it, it is not his duty to believe, it is not his duty to repent. Thus, you see, he also diminishes the sinfulness of man; and has not right views of the fall. But once get the correct view, that man is utterly fallen, powerless, guilty, defiled, lost, condemned, and you *must* be sound on all points of the great gospel of Jesus Christ. Once believe man to be what Scripture says he is—once believe his heart to be depraved, his affections perverted, his understanding darkened, his will perverse, and *you must* hold that if such a wretch as that be saved, it must be the work of the Spirit of God, and of the Spirit of God alone.

2. I have another proof ready to hand. Salvation must be the work of the Spirit in us, because *the means used in salvation are of themselves inadequate for the accomplishment of the work*. And what are the means of salvation? Why, first and foremost stands the preaching of the Word of God. More men are brought to Christ by preaching than by any thing else; for it is God's chief and first instrument. This is the sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. "It pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." But

what is there in preaching, by which souls are saved, that looks as if it would be the means of saving souls? I could point you to divers churches and chapels into which you might step, and say, "Here is a learned minister, indeed, a man who would instruct and enlighten the intellect;" you sit down, and you say, "Well, if God means to work a great work, he will use a learned man like this." But do you know any learned men that are made the means of bringing souls to Christ, to any great degree? Go round your churches, if you please, and look at them, and then answer the question. Do you know any great men—men great in learning and wisdom—who have become spiritual fathers in our Israel? Is it not a fact that stares us in the face, that our fashionable preachers, our eloquent preachers, our learned preachers, are just the most useless men in creation for the winning of souls to Christ. And where are souls born to God? Why, in the house around which the jeer and the scoff and the sneer of the world have long gathered. Sinners are converted under the man whose eloquence is rough and homely, and who has nothing to commend him to his fellows, who has daily to fall on his knees and confess his own folly, and when the world speaks worst of him, feels that he deserves it all, since he is nothing but an earthen vessel, in which God is pleased to put his heavenly treasure. I will dare to say it, that in every age of the world the most despised ministry has been the most useful; and I could find you at this day poor Primitive Methodist preachers who can scarce speak correct English, who have been the fathers of more souls, and have brought to Christ more than any one bishop on the bench. Why, the Lord hath been pleased always to make it so, that he will clothe with power the weak and the foolish, but he will not clothe with power those who, if good were done, might be led to ascribe the excellence of the power to their learning, their eloquence, or their position. Like the apostle Paul, it is every minister's business to glory in his infirmities. The world says, "Pshaw! upon your oratory; it is rough, and rude, and eccentric." Yet, 'tis even so, but we are content, for God blesses it. Then so much the better that it has infirmities in it; for now shall it be plainly seen that it is not of man or by man, but the work of God, and of God alone. It is said that once upon a time a man exceedingly curious desired to see the sword with which a mighty hero had fought some desperate battles; casting his eye along the blade, he said, "Well, I don't see much in this sword." "Nay," said the hero, "but you have not examined the arm that wields it." And so when men come to hear a successful minister, they are apt to say, "I do not see any thing in him." No, but you have not examined the eternal arm that reaps its harvest with this sword of the Spirit. If ye had looked at the jaw-bone of the ass in Samson's hand, you would have said, "What! heaps on heaps with this!" No; bring out some polished blade; bring forth the Damascus steel! NO; but God would have all the glory, and, therefore, not with the polished steel, but with the jaw-bone must Samson get the victory. So with ministers; God has usually blessed the weakest to do the most good. Well, now, does it not follow from this, that it must be the work of the Spirit? Because, if there be nothing in the instrument that can lead thereunto, is it not the work of the Spirit when the thing is accomplished? Let me just put it to you. Under the ministry dead souls are quickened, sinners are made to repent, the vilest of sinners are made holy, men who came determined not to believe are compelled to believe. Now, who does this? If you say the ministry does it, then I say farewell to your reason, because there is nothing in the successful ministry which would tend thereunto. It must be that the Spirit worketh in man through the ministry or else such deeds would never be accomplished. You might as well expect to raise the dead by whispering in their ears, as hope to save souls by preaching to them, if it were not for the agency of the Spirit. Melancthon went out to preach, you know, without the Spirit of the Lord, and he thought he should convert all the people, but he found out at last that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon,

and he had to go back and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit or ever he saw a soul saved. I say, that the fact that the ministry is blessed proves, since there is nothing in the ministry, that salvation must be the work of a higher power.

Other means, however, are made use of to bless men's souls. For instance, the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are both made a rich means of grace. But let me ask you, is there any thing in baptism that can possibly bless any body? Can immersion in water have the slightest tendency to be blessed to the soul? And then with regard to the eating of bread and the drinking of wine at the Lord's Supper, can it by any means be conceived by any rational man that there is any thing in the mere piece of bread that we eat, or in the wine that we drink? And yet, doubtless, the grace of God does go with both ordinances for the confirming of the faith of those who receive them, and even for the conversion of those who look upon the ceremony. There must be something, then, beyond the outward ceremony; there must, in fact, be the Spirit of God, witnessing through the water, witnessing through the wine, witnessing through the bread, or otherwise none of these things could be means of grace to our souls. They could not edify; they could not help us to commune with Christ; they could not tend to the conviction of sinners, or to the establishment of saints. There must, then, from these facts, be a higher, unseen, mysterious influence—the influence of the divine Spirit of God.

3. Let me again remind you, in the third place, that the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact, that *all which has been done by God the Father, and all that has been done God the Son must be ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls.* We believe, in the first place, that God the Father elects his people; from before all worlds he chooses them to himself, but let me ask you—what effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man until the Spirit of God enters into him? How do I know whether God has chosen me from before the foundation of the world? How can I possibly know. Can I climb to heaven and read the roll? Is it possible for me to force my way through the thick mists which hide eternity, and open the seven seals of the book, and read my name recorded there? Ah! no; election is a dead letter both in my consciousness and in any effect which it can produce upon me, until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvelous light. And then, through my calling, I see my election, and, knowing myself to be called of God, I know myself to have been chosen of God from before the foundation of the world. It is a precious thing—that doctrine of election—to a child of God. But what makes it precious? Nothing but the influence of the Spirit. Until the Spirit opens the eye to read, until the Spirit imparts the mystic secret, no heart can know its election. No angel ever revealed to any man that he was chosen of God; but the Spirit doth it. He, by his divine workings bears an infallible witness with our spirits that we are born of God; and then we are enabled to “read our title clear to mansions in the skies.”

Look, again, at the covenant of grace. We know that there was a covenant made with the Lord Jesus Christ by his Father from before all worlds, and that in this covenant the persons of all his people were given to him, and were secured; but of what use, or of what avail is the covenant to us, until the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of the covenant to us? The covenant is, as it were, a holy tree laden with fruit; if the Spirit doth not shake that tree, and make the fruit fall therefrom, until it comes to the level of our standing, how can we receive it? Bring hither any sinner and tell him there is a covenant of grace, what is he advantaged thereby? “Ah,” says he, “I may not be included in it; my name may not be recorded there; I may not be chosen in Christ;” but let the Spirit of God dwell in his heart, richly by faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, and that man sees the

covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and he cries with David, "It is all my salvation and all my desire."

Take, again, the redemption of Christ. We know that Christ did stand in the room, place, and stead of all his people, and that all those who shall appear in heaven will appear there as an act of justice as well as of grace, seeing that Christ was punished in their room and stead, and that it would have been unjust if God punished them, seeing that he had punished Christ for them. We believe that Christ, having paid all their debts, they have a right to their freedom in Christ—that Christ having covered them with his righteousness, they are entitled to eternal life as much as if they had themselves been perfectly holy. But of what avail is this to me, until the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me? What is Christ's blood to any of you until you have received the Spirit of grace? You have heard the minister preach about the blood of Christ a thousand times, but you passed by; it was nothing to you that Jesus should die. You know that he did atone for sins that were not his own; but you only regarded it as a tale, perhaps, even an idle tale. But when the Spirit of God led you to the cross, and opened your eyes, and enabled you to see Christ crucified, ah, then there was something in the blood indeed. When his hand dipped the hyssop in the blood, and when it applied that blood to, your spirit, then there was a joy and peace in believing, such as you had never known before. But ah, my hearer, Christ's dying is nothing to thee unless thou hast a living Spirit within thee. Christ brings thee no advantage, saving, personal, and lasting, unless the Spirit of God hath baptized thee in the fountain filled with his blood, and washed thee from head to foot therein.

I only mention these few out of the many blessings of the covenant just to prove that they are, none of them, of any use to us, unless the Holy Spirit gives them to us. There hang the blessings on the nail—on the nail, Christ Jesus; but we are short of stature; we cannot reach them; the Spirit of God takes them down and gives them to us, and there they are; they are ours. It is like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach; but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven, brings down the bread, and puts it to our lips, and enables us to eat. Christ's blood and righteousness are like wine stored in the wine-vat; but we cannot get thereat. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine, and then we drink; but without the Spirit we must die and perish just as much, though the Father elect and the Son redeem, as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son had never bought us with his blood. The Spirit is absolutely necessary. Without him neither the works of the Father, nor of the Son, are of any avail to us.

4. This brings us to another point. *The experience of the true Christian is a reality; but it never can be known and felt without the Spirit of God.* For what is the experience of the Christian? Let me just give a brief picture of some of its scenes. There is a person come into this hall this morning—one of the most reputable men in London. He has never committed himself in any outward vice; he has never been dishonest; but he is known as a staunch, upright tradesman. Now, to his astonishment, he is informed that he is a condemned, lost sinner, and just as surely lost as the thief who died for his crimes upon the cross. Do you think that man will believe it? Suppose, however, that he does believe it, simply because he reads it in the Bible, do you think that man will ever be made to feel it? I know you say, "Impossible!" Some of you, even now, perhaps, are saying, "Well, I never should!" Can you imagine that honorable, upright tradesman, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner?"—standing side by side with the harlot and the swearer, and feeling in his own heart as if he had been as guilty as they were, and using just the same prayer and saying, "Lord, save, or I perish." You cannot conceive it, can you? It is contrary to nature that a man who

has been so good as he should pat himself down among the chief of sinners. Ah! but that will be done before he will be saved; he must feel that before he can enter heaven. Now, I ask, who can bring him to such a leveling experience as that, but the Spirit of God? Ye know very well proud nature will not stoop to it. We are all aristocrats in our own righteousness; we do not like to bend down and come among common sinners. If we are brought there, it must be the Spirit of God who casts us to the ground. Why, I know if any one had told me that I should ever cry to God for mercy, and confess that I had been the vilest of the vile, I should have laughed in their face; I should have said, "Why I have not done anything particularly wrong; I have not hurt anybody." And yet I know this very day I can take my place upon the lowest form, and if I can get inside heaven I shall feel happy to sit among the chief of sinners, and praise that Almighty love which has saved even me from my sins.. Now, what works this humiliation of heart? Grace. It is contrary to nature for an honest and an upright man in the eye of the world to feel himself a lost sinner. It must be the Holy Spirit's work, or else it never will be done. Well, after a man has been brought here, can you conceive that man at last conscience-stricken, and led to believe that his past life deserves the wrath of God? His first thought would be, "Well, now, I will live better than I ever have lived." He would say, "Now, I will try and play the hermit, and pinch myself here and there, and deny myself, and do penance; and in that way, by paying attention to the outward ceremonies of religion, together with a high moral character, I doubt not I shall blot out whatever slurs and stains there have been." Can you suppose that man brought at last to feel that, if ever he gets to heaven, he will have to get there through the righteousness of another? "Through the righteousness of another?" says he, "I don't want to be rewarded for what another man does,—not I. If I go there, I will go there and take my chance; I will go there through what I do myself. Tell me something to do, and I will do it; I will be proud to do it, however humiliating it may be, so that I may at last win the love and esteem of God." Now, can you conceive such a man as that brought to feel that he can do nothing?—that, good man as he thinks himself, he cannot do any thing whatever to merit God's love and favor; and that, if he goes to heaven, he must go through what Christ did? Just the same as the drunkard must go there through the merits of Christ, so this moral man must enter into life, having nothing about him but Christ's perfect righteousness, and being washed in the blood of Jesus. We say that this is so contrary to human nature, so diametrically opposed to all the instincts of our poor fallen humanity, that nothing but the Spirit of God can ever bring a man to strip himself of all self-righteousness, and of all creature strength, and compel him to rest and lean simply and wholly upon Jesus Christ the Saviour.

These two experiences would be sufficient to prove the necessity of the Holy Spirit to make a man a Christian. But let me now describe a Christian as he is after his conversion. Trouble comes, storms of trouble, and he looks the tempest in the face and says, "I know that all things work together for my good." His children die, the partner of his bosom is carried to the grave; he says, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." His farm fails, his crop is blighted; his business prospects are clouded, all seem to go, and he is left in poverty: he says, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." You see him next laid upon a sick bed himself, and when he is there, he says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word." You see him approaching at last the dark valley of the shadow of death, and you hear him cry, "Yea,

though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me, and thou thyself art with me." Now, I ask you, what makes this man calm in the midst of all these varied trials, and personal troubles, if it be not the Spirit of God? O, ye that doubt the influence of the Spirit, produce the like without him, go ye and die as Christians die, and live as they live, and if you can show the same calm resignation, the same quiet joy, and the same firm belief that adverse things shall, nevertheless, work together for good, then we may be, perhaps, at liberty to resign the point, and not till then. The high and noble experience of a Christian in times of trial and suffering, proves that there must be the operation of the Spirit of God.

But look at the Christian, too, in his joyous moments. He is rich. God has given him all his heart's desire on earth. Look at him: he says, "I do not value these things at all, except as they are the gift of God; I sit loose by them all and, notwithstanding this house and home, and all these comforts, 'I am willing to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.' It is true, I want nothing here on earth; but still I feel that to die would be gain to me, even though I left all these." He holds earth loosely; he does not grasp it with a tight hand, but looks upon it all as dust,—a thing which is to pass away. He takes but little pleasure therein, saying,—

"I've no abiding city here,
I seek a city out of sight."

Mark that man; he has plenty of room for pleasures in this world, but he drinks out of a higher cistern. His pleasure springs from things unseen; his happiest moments are when he can shut all these good things out, and when he can come to God as a poor guilty sinner, and come to Christ and enter into fellowship with him, and rise into nearness of access and confidence, and boldly approach to the throne of the heavenly grace. Now, what is it that keeps a man who has all these mercies from setting his heart upon the earth? This is a wonder, indeed, that a man who has gold and silver, and flocks and herds, should not make these his god, but that he should still say,—

"There's nothing round this spacious earth
That suits my large desire;
To boundless joy and solid mirth
My nobler thoughts aspire."

These are not my treasure; my treasure is in heaven, and in heaven only. What can do this? No mere moral virtue. No doctrine of the Stoic ever brought a man to such a pass as that. No, it must be the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Spirit alone, that can lead a man to live in heaven, while there is a temptation to him to live on earth. I do not wonder that a poor man looks forward to heaven; he has nothing to look upon on earth. When there is a thorn in the nest, I do not wonder that the lark flies up, for there is no rest for him below. When you are beaten and chafed by trouble, no wonder you say,—

"Jerusalem! my happy home!
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

But the greatest wonder is, if you line the Christian's nest never so softly, if you give him all the mercies of this life, you still cannot keep him from saying,—

"To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone;
Oh bear me, ye cherubim, up,

And waft me away to his throne.”

5. And now, last of all, the acts, *the acceptable acts, of the Christian's life, cannot be performed without the Spirit*; and hence, again, the necessity for the Spirit of God. The first act of the Christian's life is repentance. Have you ever tried to repent? If so, if you tried without the Spirit of God you know that to urge a man to repent without the promise of the Spirit to help him, is to urge him to do an impossibility. A rock might as soon weep, and a desert might as soon blossom, as a sinner repent of his own accord. If God should offer heaven to man, simply upon the terms of repentance of sin, heaven would be as impossible as it is by good works; for a man can no more repent of himself, than he can perfectly keep God's law; for repentance involves the very principle of perfect obedience to the law of God. It seems to me that in repentance there is the whole law solidified and condensed; and if a man can repent of himself then there is no need of a Saviour, he may as well go to heaven up the steep sides of Sinai at once.

Faith is the next act in the divine life. Perhaps you think faith very easy; but if you are ever brought to feel the burden of sin you would not find it quite so light a labor. If you are ever brought into deep mire, where there is no standing, it is not so easy to put your feet on a rock, when the rock does not seem to be there. I find faith just the easiest thing in the world when there is nothing to believe; but when I have room and exercise for my faith, then I do not find I have so much strength to accomplish it. Talking one day with a countryman, he used this figure: “In the middle of winter I sometimes think how well I could mow; and in early spring I think, oh! how I would like to reap; I feel just ready for it; but when mowing time comes, and when reaping time comes, I find I have not strength to spare.” So when you have no troubles, couldn't you mow them down at once? When you have no work to do, couldn't you do it? But when work and trouble come you find how difficult it is. Many Christians are like the stag, who talked to itself, and said, “Why should I run away from the dogs? Look what a fine pair of horns I've got, and look what heels I've got too; I might do these hounds some mischief. Why not let me stand and show them what I can do with my antlers? I can keep off any quantity of dogs.” No sooner did the dogs bark, than off the stag went. So with us. “Let sin arise,” we say, “we will soon rip it up, and destroy it; let trouble come, we will soon get over it; but when sin and trouble come, we then find what our weakness is. Then we have to cry for the help of the Spirit; and through him we can do all things, though without him we can do nothing at all.

In all the acts of the Christian's life, whether it be the act of consecrating one's self to Christ, or the act of daily prayer, or the act of constant submission, or preaching the gospel, or ministering to the necessities of the poor, or comforting the desponding, in all these the Christian finds his weakness and his powerlessness, unless he is clothed about with the Spirit of God. Why, I have been to see the sick at times, and I have thought how I would like to comfort them; and I could not get a word out that was worth their hearing, or worth my saying; and my soul has been in agony to be the means of comforting the poor, sick, desponding brother; but I could do nothing, and I came out of the chamber, and half wished I had never been to see a sick person in my life: I had so learned my own folly. So has it been full often in preaching. You get a sermon up, study it, and come and make the greatest mess of it that can possibly be. Then you say, “I wish I had never preached at all.” But all this is to show us, that neither in comforting nor in preaching can one do any thing right, unless the Spirit work in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Every thing, moreover, that we do with out the Spirit is unacceptable to God; and whatever we do under his influence, however we may despise it, is not despised of God, for he never despises his own work,

and the Spirit never can look upon what he works. in us with any other view than that of complacency and delight. If the Spirit helps me to groan, then God must accept the groaner. If thou couldst pray the best prayer in the world, without the Spirit, God would have nothing to do with it; but if thy prayer be broken, and lame, and limping, if the Spirit made it, God will look upon it, and say, as he did upon the works of creation, "It is very good;" and he will accept it.

And now let me conclude by asking this question. My hearer, then have you the Spirit of God in you? You have some religion, most of you, I dare say. Well, of what kind is it? Is it a homemade article? Did you make yourself what you are? Then, if so, you are a lost man up to this moment. If, my hearer, you have gone no further than you have walked yourself, you are not on the road to heaven yet; you have got your face turned the wrong way; but if you have received something which neither flesh nor blood could reveal to you, if you have been led to do the very thing which you once hated, and to love that thing which you once despised, and to despise that on which your heart and your pride were once set, then, soul, if this be the Spirit's work, rejoice; for where he hath begun the good work he will carry it on. And you may know whether it is the Spirit's work by this. Have you been led to Christ, and away from self: Have you been led away from all feelings, from all doings, from all willings, from all prayings, as the ground of your trust and your hope, and have you been brought nakedly to rely upon the finished work of Christ? If so, this is more than human nature ever taught any man; this is a height to which human nature never climbed. The Spirit of God has done that, and he will never leave what he has once begun, but thou shalt go from strength to strength, and thou shalt stand among the bloodwashed throng, at last complete in Christ, and accepted in the beloved. But if you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his. May the Spirit lead you to your chamber now to weep, now to repent, and now to look to Christ, and may you now have a divine life implanted, which neither time nor eternity shall be able to destroy. God, hear this prayer, and send us away with a blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Holy Violence

A Sermon

(No. 252)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 15th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,”—Matthew 11:12.

WHEN JOHN THE BAPTIST preached in the wilderness of Judea, the throng of people who pressed around him became extremely violent to get near enough to hear his voice. Often when our Saviour preached did the like scene occur. We find that the multitudes were immense beyond all precedent. He seemed to drain every city, every town, and every village, as he went along preaching the word of the gospel. These people, moreover, not like our common church-and-chapel-goers,—content to hear, if they could, and yet more content to keep without hearing, if it were possible,—were extremely earnest to get near enough to hear anyhow. So intense was their desire to hear the Saviour that they pressed upon him, insomuch that they trod one upon another. The crowd became so violent to approach his person, that some of the weaker ones were cast down and trodden upon. Now, our Saviour, when he witnessed all this struggling round about to get near him, said, “This is just a picture of what is done spiritually by those who will be saved. As you press and throng about me,” said Christ, “and thrust one another, with arm and elbow, to get within reach of my voice, even so must it be if ye would be saved, ‘For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’” He pictured to himself a crowd of souls desiring to get to the living Saviour. He saw them press, and crowd, and throng, and thrust, and tread on one another, in their anxious desire to get at him. He warned his hearers, that unless they had this earnestness in their souls, they would never reach him savingly; but if they had it, they should certainly be saved. “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”

“But,” says one, “do you wish us to understand, that if a man is to be saved he must use violence and vehement earnestness in order to obtain salvation?” I do, most assuredly; that is the doctrine of the text. “But,” says one, “I thought it was all the work of God.” So it is, from first to last. But when God has begun the work in the soul, the constant effect of God’s work in us is to set us working; and where God’s Spirit is really striving with us, we shall begin to strive too. This is just a test whereby we may distinguish the men who have received the Spirit of God, from those who have not received it. Those who have received the Spirit in verity and truth are violent men. They have a violent anxiety to be saved, and they violently strive that they may enter in at the strait gate. Well they know that seeking to enter in is not enough, for many shall seek to enter in but shall not be able, and therefore do they strive with might and main.

I shall this morning, first, direct your attention to these violent men. *Look at them.* Secondly, we shall *show their conduct.* What makes them so violent? Are they justified in this impetuous vehemence? We shall next rejoice in the fact, that *they are sure to be successful in their violence.* And then, I shall endeavour *to arouse in your hearts,* by the help of God’s Holy Spirit, *that holy*

violence, without which the gates of heaven will be shut in your teeth, and you will never be able to enter the pearly portals of Paradise.

1. First then, **LET US LOOK AT THESE VIOLENT MEN.** Understand that what they are, they have been made by divine grace. They are not so naturally of themselves. But there has been a secret work of grace in them, and then they have become violent men. Look at these violent men, who are violently in earnest to be saved. You will observe them when they come up to the house of God; there is no yawning with them, no listlessness or inattention, no imagination that if they do but sit in the place the hour-and-a-half which is regularly allotted to divine worship, they will have done enough. No; they hear with both their ears, and they look with both their eyes, and all through the service they have an intense desire that they may find Christ. Meet them as they go up to the house of prayer, and ask them why they are going there. They know right well what they are going after. "I am going there to find mercy, and to find peace and rest to my soul; for I am in anguish about sin, and I want to find the Saviour; I am in hopes that being in the way the Lord will meet with me, so I am about to lay myself down by the side of the pool of Bethesda, in the hope that the Holy Spirit will stir the pool and enable me to step in." You do not find these people like the most of modern hearers, critical, or else careless. No; they are all awake to see whether there is not something to be had which may be a balm to their wearied spirits, and a cordial to their troubled breasts. Mark these violent people after they have gone home. They go to their chambers and they begin to pray; not that prayer between sleeping and waking that some of you are used to attend to, not that drowsy supplication which never gets beyond the ceiling of your bedroom; but they fall on their knees and with a holy anxiety they begin to cry, "Lord, save or I perish; O Lord save me; I am ready to perish, Lord; I beseech thee, stretch out thine hand and rescue my poor soul from that destruction which now haunts my spirit." And see them after they have prayed, how they turn over the Word of God. They do not read its chapters as if the mere looking at the letters was enough, but they read just as Watts says in his hymn,

"Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord,
Whose hope, still hovering round thy word
Would light on some sweet promise there,
Some sure support against despair."

And down they are on their knees again. "O Lord speak to my soul through thy word! Lord help me to lay hold on the promise, enable me to grasp it! Oh, let not my soul perish for lack of thy help and thy grace." And then see these violent men whom God has really made in earnest about being saved. You will not find them leaving their devotions in their closets, or in their house of prayer. Wherever they go there is a solemn earnestness upon them, which the world cannot understand. They are seeking after Jesus, and rest they neither will nor can until they find him. Their nights are disturbed with dreams, and their days are made sad with their pantings after the blessing—without which they cannot live, and without which they dare not die.

My hearer, have you ever been one of these violent men, or are you so now? Blessed be God if this holy violence is in your spirit: you shall take heaven by force yet; you shall take it by storm, and carry the gates of heaven by the battery of your prayers. Only persevere with importunity; still plead, still wrestle, still continue to strive, and you must at length prevail. But ah! my hearer, if thou hast never had a strong unconquerable anxiety about thy soul, thou art as yet a stranger to the things of God. Thou dost not understand that violence victorious without which the gates of heaven never can be stormed. Some of us can look back to the time when we were seeking Christ. I could

myself awake of a morning easily then. The first ray of light that came into my chamber would awaken me to take up Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* that lay under my pillow. I believed I had not repented enough, and I began to read that. Oh! how I hoped that would break my heart. And then I would get Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, and Allen's *Alarm*, and read them. But, still, I think I might have read them to this day, and not been a whit the better, if I had not something better than alarm, in remembering that Christ came into the world to save every sinner who was willing to cast himself upon his blood and righteousness, and take him at his word, and trust God. Have ye not seen many—and are there not many among us—men who have said, "I must have mercy, I must have it: it is not a thing which I may have, or may not have; but I am a lost soul if I have it not?" And when they have gone to pray they have seemed like Samsons; they have got hold of the two posts of heaven's gate of mercy, and they have pulled as if they would pull them up by their eternal roots sooner than not get the blessing. They have hammered at the gates of heaven until it seemed as if they would split the golden bolts rather than be turned away. No man ever gets peace until he gets into such a passion of earnestness to be saved, that he cannot find peace until Christ speaks pardon to his soul, and brings him into life and liberty. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

But this violence does not end when a man finds Christ; it then begins to exercise itself in another way. The man who is pardoned, and who knows it, then becomes violently in love with Christ. He does not love him just a little, but he loves him with all his soul and all his might. He feels as if he could wish to die for Christ, and his heart pants to be able to live alone with his Redeemer, and serve him without interruption. Mark such a man who is a true Christian, mark his prayers, and you will see there is violence in all his supplications when he pleads for the souls of men. Mark his outward actions, and they are violently sincere, violently earnest. Mark him when he preaches: there is no dull droning out of a monotonous discourse, he speaks like a man who means what he says, and who must speak it, or else woe would be unto him if he preached not the gospel. As I look around on many of the churches, yea, on many members of my own church, I am apt to fear that they are not God's children at all, because they have nothing of this holy violence. Have ye ever read Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*? I dare say you have thought it one of the strongest imaginations ever put together, especially that part where the old mariner represents the corpses of all the dead men rising up,—all of them dead, yet rising up to manage the ship; dead men pulling the ropes, dead men steering, dead men spreading the sails. I thought what a strange idea that was. But do you know I have lived to see that true: I have seen it done. I have gone into churches and I have seen a dead man in the pulpit, and a dead man as a deacon, and a dead man holding the plate at the door, and dead men sitting to hear. You say "Strange!" but I have. I have gone into societies, and I have seen it all going on so regularly. These dead men, you know, never overstep the bounds of prudence,—not they: they have not life enough to do that. They always pull the rope orderly, "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen." And the dead man in the pulpit, is he not most regular and precise? He systematically draws his handkerchief from his pocket, and uses it just at the regular period, in the middle of the sermon. He would not think of violating a single rubric that has been laid down by his old-fashioned church. Well, I have seen these churches—I know where to point them out—and have seen dead men doing everything. "No," says one, "you can't mean it?" Yes, I do, the men were spiritually dead. I have seen the minister preaching, without a particle of life, a sermon, which is only fresh in the sense in which a fish is fresh when it has been packed in ice. I have seen the people sit, and they have listened as

if they had been a group of statues—the chiseled marble would have been as much affected by the sermon as they I have seen the deacons go about their business just as orderly, and with as much precision as if they had been mere automatons, and not men with hearts and souls at all. Do you think God will ever bless a church that is like that? Are we ever to take the kingdom of heaven with a troop of dead men? Never! We want living ministers, living hearers, living deacons, living elders, and until we have such men who have got the very fire of life burnings in their souls, who have got tongues of life, and eyes of life, and souls of life, we shall never see the kingdom of heaven taken by storm. “For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”

Frequently complaints are made and surprise expressed by individuals who have never found a blessing rest upon anything they have attempted to do in the service of God. “I have been a Sunday-school teacher for years,” says one, “and I have never seen any of my girls or boys converted.” No, and the reason most likely is, you have never been violent about it; you have never been compelled by the Divine Spirit to make up your mind that converted they should be, and no stone should be left unturned until they were. You have never been brought by the Spirit to such a passion, that you have said, “I cannot live unless God bless me; I cannot exist unless I see some of these children saved.” Then, falling on your knees in agony of prayer, and putting forth afterwards your trust with the same intensity towards heaven, you would never have been disappointed, “for the violent take it by force.” And you too, my brother in the gospel, you have marvelled and wondered why you have not seen souls regenerated. Did you ever expect it? Why, you preach like one who does not believe what he is saying. Those who believe in Christ, may say of you with kind partiality, “Our minister is a dear good man;” but the careless young men that attend your ministry, say, “Does that man expect to make me believe that which he only utters as a dry story, and to convince me when I see him go through the service with all the dulness and monotony of dead routine?” Oh, my brethren, what we want today in the churches is violence, not violence against each other, but violence against death, and hell, against the hardness of other men’s hearts, and against the sleepiness of our own. In Martin Luther’s time, truly the kingdom of heaven suffered violence. The whole religious world was wide awake. Now, I fear for the most part it is sound asleep. Go where you may, our churches have come to be old-established businesses. They do not care to extend themselves. We must have new blood, nay, we must have new fire from heaven to fall upon the sacrifice, or else, like Baal’s priests, we may cut and hack our bodies, and distract our minds in vain; there will be “no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regardeth.” The sacrifice shall lay unburnt upon the altar, and the world will say our God is not the living God, or surely we are not his people, “And thou shalt grope at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee.” Violent men, then, are those that take the kingdom of heaven by force.

II. NOW, BRING THESE VIOLENT MEN FORWARD, AND LET US ASK THEM WHAT THEY ARE ABOUT. When a man is very earnest, he ought to be ready to give a reason for his earnestness. “How now, sirs, what is all this strife about? why all this earnestness? You seem to be boiling over with enthusiasm. What is up? Is there anything that is worth making such a stir about?” Hear them, and they will soon convince you that all their enthusiasm and striving to enter the kingdom of heaven by force, is not a whit more strong than reasonable.

The first reason why poor sinners take the kingdom of heaven by force is, because they feel they have no natural right to it; and, therefore, they must need take it by force if they would get it at all. When a man belongs to the House of Lords, and knows that he has got a seat there by

prescriptive right and title, he does not trouble himself at the time of the elections. But there is another man, who says, "Well, I should like a seat in the House of Commons, but I have no absolute right to it. If I get it, it will be by a desperate struggle." Do you not see how busy he is on the day! how the carriages fly about everywhere; and how earnest are his supporters that he may stand at the head of the poll and win the day! He says, "I have no absolute right to it; if I had, then I would just take it easy and walk into my seat at the proper time." But now he labors, and strives, and wrestles, because without so doing he does not expect to succeed. Now, look at those who are saved; they have no right to the inheritance they are seeking. What are they? Sinners, the chief of sinners; in their own esteem the vilest of the vile. Now, if they would get heaven they must take it by force, for they have no right to it by birth or lineal entail. And what are they else? They are the poor ones of this earth. There stands the rabbi at the gate, and he says, "You can't come in here; this is no place for the poor to enter." "But," says he. "I will;" and pushing the rabbi aside, he takes it by force. Then, again, they were Gentiles too; and Jews stood at the gate, and said, "Stand back, you Gentile dogs, you cannot come in." Now, if such would be saved, they must take the kingdom of heaven by storm, for they have no rights to assert. Ah, my fellow men, if ye sit down and fold your arms, and say, "I am so good I have a right to heaven,"—how deceived you will be. But if God has convinced you of your lost, ruined, and undone condition, and if he has put his quickening Spirit within you, you will use a bold and desperate violence to force your way into the kingdom of heaven. The Spirit of God will not lead you to be obsequious in the presence of foes, or faint-hearted in the overwhelming crisis; he will drive you to desperate labour that you may be saved.

Ask one such man, again, why is he so violent in prayer; he replies, "Ah, I know the value of the mercy I receive. Why, I am asking for pardon, for heaven, for eternal life, and am I to get these with a few yawns and sleepy prayers? I am asking that I may wear the white robe, and sing the never-ending song of praise; and do you think that a few poor supplications are to be enough? No, my God; if thou wouldst make me tarry a hundred years, and sigh, and groan, and cry through that long century;—yes, if I might but have heaven at last, all my prayers would have been well-spent; nay, had they been a thousand times as many, they were well rewarded if thou wouldst hear me at last. But," says he again, "if you want to know why I am so earnest, let me tell you it is because I cannot bear to be lost for ever." Hear the earnest sinner when he speaks. You say to him "Why so earnest?" The tear is in his eye, the flush is on his cheek, there is emotion in every feature, while he says, "Would to God I could be far more earnest; do you know I am a lost soul, perhaps before another hour is over I may be shut up in the hopeless fires of hell! Oh, God, have mercy on me, for if thou dost not, how terrible is my fate. I shall be lost—lost for ever!"

Once let a man know that hell is beneath his feet, and if that does not make him earnest, what would? No wonder that his prayers are importunate, that his endeavours are intensely earnest, when he knows that he must escape, or else the devouring fire will lay hold on him. Suppose now, you had been a Jew in the olden time, and one day while taking a walk in the fields you had seen a man running with all his might. "Stop!" you say, "stop! my dear friend, you will exhaust yourself." He goes on, and on, with all his might. You run after him. "Pause awhile," you say, "and rest; the grass is soft, sit down here, and take your ease. See, here I have some food and a bottle; stop and refresh yourself." But without saluting you, he says, "No, I must away, away, away." "Why? wherefore?" you say. He is gone so far ahead, you run after him with all your might; and scarcely able to turn his head, he exclaims, "The city of refuge! the city of refuge! the manslayer is behind me." Now,

it is all accounted for; you do not wonder that he runs with all his might now. When the manslayer is after him, you can well understand that he would never pause for rest until he has found the city of refuge. So let a man know that the devil is behind him, that the avenging law of God is pursuing him, and who can make him stop? Who shall endeavor to make him stay his race until he enters Christ, the city of refuge, and finds himself secure? This will make a man earnest indeed—to dread “the wrath to come,” and to be labouring to escape therefrom.

Another reason why every man who would be safe must be in earnest, and be violent, is this, there are so many adversaries to oppose us, that if we are not violent we shall never be able to overcome them. Do you remember that beautiful parable in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim*? “I saw also, that the Interpreter took him by the hand, and led him into a pleasant place, where was built a stately palace, beautiful to behold; at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted. He saw also upon the top thereof certain persons walking, who were clothed all in gold. Then said Christian, ‘May we go in thither?’ Then the Interpreter took him and led him up toward the door of the palace; and behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but durst not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table-side, with a book and his ink-horn before him, to take the name of him that should enter therein; he saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armour to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. Now was Christian somewhat in amaze. At last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, Set down my name, sir;’ the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword, and put a helmet upon his head, and rush toward the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force; but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, (Matt. xi. 12. Acts xiv. 22.) he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace; at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those that walked upon the top of the palace, saying,

‘Come in, come in,
Eternal glory thou shalt win.’

So he went in, and was clothed with such garments as they.” And surely the dreamer saw the truth in his dream. It is even so. If we would win eternal glory we must fight.

“Sure we must fight, if we would reign;
Increase our courage, Lord!”

Ye have enemies within you, enemies without, enemies beneath, enemies on every side—the world, the flesh, and the devil; and if the Spirit of God has quickened you, he has made a soldier of you, and you can never sheathe your sword till you gain the victory. The man who would be saved must be violent, because of the opposition he has to encounter.

But do you still condemn this man, and say that he is an enthusiast and a fanatic? Then God himself comes forth to vindicate his despised servant. Know that this is the sign, the mark of distinction between the true child of God and the bastard-professor. The men who are not God's children are a careless, stumbling, coldhearted race. But the men that are God's in sincerity and truth, are burning as well as shining lights. They are as brilliant constellations in the firmament of heaven, burning stars of God. Of all things in the world, God hates most the man that is neither hot nor cold. Better have no religion than have a little: better to be altogether without it, enemies to it, than to have just enough to make you respectable, but not enough to make you earnest. What does

God say concerning the religion of this day? “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Lukewarmness of all things God abhors, and yet of all things it is the predominant mark of the present day. The time of the Methodists, of Whitfield and Wesley, was a time indeed of fire and of divine violence and vigour. But we have gradually cooled down, now, into a delightful consistency, and though here and there there is a little breaking out of the old desperado spirit of the Christian religion, yet for the most part the world has so mesmerised the church, that she is as nearly asleep as she can be; and much of her teaching, and much of the doings of her religious societies, is sheer somnambulism. It is not the wide-awake earnestness of them that walk with their eyes open. They walk in their sleep; very nimbly they walk, too and very nicely they “trim their way,” but very little is there of the life of God in aught they do, and very little of divine success attending their agencies, because they are not violent with regard to the matters of the kingdom of God.

III. Having thus endeavoured to screen the violent men from harsh criticism, I shall now invite you for a moment to reflect, that **THE VIOLENT MAN IS ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL**. Do you think you are going to be carried to heaven on a feather bed? Have you got a notion in your heads that the road to paradise is all a lawn, the grass smoothly mown, still waters and green pastures ever and anon to cheer you? You have just got to clear your heads of that deceitful fancy. The way to heaven is up hill and down hill; up hill with difficulty, down hill with trials. It is through fire and through water, through flood and through flame, by the lions and by the leopards. Through the very mouths of dragons is the path to paradise. But the man who finds it so, and who desperately resolves in the strength of God to tread that path—nay, who does not resolve as if he could do nothing else but resolve, but who feels driven, as if with a hurricane behind him, to go into the right road, this man is never unsuccessful, never. Where God has given a violent anxiety for salvation he never disappoints it. No soul that has ever cried for it with a violent cry has been disappointed. From the beginning of creation until now there has never been raised to the throne of God a violent and earnest prayer which missed its answer. Go, soul, in the strong confidence that if thou goest earnestly thou goest successfully. God may sooner deny himself than deny the request of an earnest man. Our God may sooner cease to be “the Lord God, gracious and merciful,” than cease to bless the men who seek the gates of heaven, with the violence of faith and prayer. Oh, reflect, that all the saints above have been led by divine grace to wrestle hard as we do now with sins, and doubts, and fears. They had no smooth path to glory. They had to dispute every inch of the way at the sword’s point. So must you: and as surely as you are enabled to do so, so surely will you conquer. *Only* the violent are saved, and *all* the violent are saved. When God makes a man violent after salvation, that man cannot perish. The gates of heaven may sooner be unhinged than that man be robbed of the prize for which he has fought.

IV. And, now I have to close, for I find my voice fails me this morning, when most I need it. I have to close abruptly by endeavouring earnestly **TO EXCITE EACH OF YOU TO A VIOLENCE AFTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**. In this great crowd there are surely some of the class I am about to describe. There is one man here who says, “I don’t know that I have done much amiss in my life: I am about as regular a man as there is living. Don’t I attend a place of worship regularly? I believe that I shall most certainly be saved. But I don’t take much trouble about it, it never disquiets me particularly. I don’t like”—says this man”—that intrusive kind of religion that always seems to be thrusting itself in everybody’s way. I think it is quite right that people should go to their place of worship, but why take any further trouble? I just believe that I shall fare as other people fare: I

am a steady unpretending sort of man, and I have no reason to doubt that I shall be saved.” Ah, friend, you have never seen the gate of heaven? It is obvious that you have never seen it, or else you would know better; for at the gate of heaven multitudes are struggling, the gates of heaven are thronged, and he that would enter there must press, and elbow, and push, or he may go away certain that he can never enter. No! your easy religion will just bring you in too late. It may carry you nine miles out of ten; but what is the good of that to a man who must perish unless he is carried the whole way? It will go a good way with you when you follow the counsels of a gospel ministry with outward propriety; but at the bar of God it will utterly fail you, when you lack the inward witness of strong crying and supplications. No! an easy religion is the way to hell, for it is not the way to heaven. Let your soul alone, and you need not expect much good fruit to come of it, any more than a farmer who leaves his fields alone, need expect to reap a harvest. Your religion is vain and futile if that is all. “Ah” cries another “but I am in quite a different case. I am a sinner so vile, sir, that I know I never can be saved, therefore, what is the use? I never think about it now, except with blank despair. Have I not long rebelled against God; will he ever pardon me? No, no; don’t exhort me to try. I may as well take my full swing of pleasure while I am here, for I feel I never shall enjoy the pleasures of heaven hereafter.” Stop friend, “The violent take it by force.” If the Lord has taught thee thy utter sinfulness, go and try—say,

“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die.”

Go home, go to your closet, fall on your knees, put your trust alone in Christ and, my friend, if the Lord does not have mercy upon you, then he is not the God we have preached to you, and he has not substantiated his faithful promise: you cannot, you shall not seek in vain. But mark, you must not think that your once seeking is enough; continue in it. If God has given you his Spirit you will continue—you will never leave off praying until you get the answer. Oh! my friend, if God hath given thee this day a longing after his love; if he has caused thee to say, “I will never give it up, I will perish at the foot of the cross if I perish at all;” thou canst no more perish than the angels in Paradise. Be of good cheer; use violence again and again, and thou shalt take it by force.

And then, let each one of us as we retire, and if we have tasted that the Lord is precious, determine to love him more earnestly than before. I never leave my pulpit without feeling ashamed of myself. I do not remember a time when I have been able to go home without being suffused with humiliation and cast down with self-reproach, because I had not been more earnest. I very seldom flog myself for using an ugly word, or anything of that sort; it is for not having been earnest enough about the salvation of men. When I sit down, I begin to think of this vast stream of people being swept along towards the gulf of eternity—bound for heaven or hell; and I wonder how it is that I do not weep all the time I am here—why it is that I do not find red-hot burning words with which to address you. I find fault with others sometimes, but far more with myself in this matter. Oh! how is it that a man can be God’s ambassador, and yet have so callous, so insensitive a heart, as many of us have in this work? Oh! how is it that we tell the tale of death and life, of heaven and hell, of Christ crucified and his gospel despised, so quietly as we do? Condemn not the minister for excitement or fanaticism; condemn him because he is not half in earnest, as he ought to be. Oh my God! impress me, I beseech thee, more with the value of souls, and then impress my hearers, also, with the value of their own souls. Are you not going to-day, many of you, post-haste to perdition?

Is it not the fact, that your conscience tells you that many of you are enemies to God? You are without Christ, you have never been washed in his blood; never been forgiven. Oh! my hearers, if ye continue as ye are, a few more rising suns, and then your sun must set for ever. Only a few more Sundays have you to waste, a few more sermons have you to hear, and the pit of hell must open wide its jaws, and then *where are you?* But a few more days, and the heavens shall be rent, and Christ shall come to judge the earth, and *sinner where are you?* Oh! I beseech you now by the living God, and by his Son Jesus Christ, think of your state; repent of your sins; turn you to God. Oh Spirit of God, turn, I pray thee, turn the hearts of sinners now. Remember, if you now repent, if you now confess your sins, Christ is preached to you. He came into the world to save sinners. Oh! believe on him; throw yourselves before his cross; trust in his blood; rely on his righteousness,—

“But if your ears refuse
 The language of his grace,
 And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
 That unbelieving race;
 The Lord, in vengeance dress'd,
 Will lift his hand and swear,
 'You that despise my promised rest,
 Shall have no portion there.'”

Oh! if I had the tongue of Whitfield, or the mouth of an archangel, if I could speak like the cherubim, I would pour out my heart before you, and pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. I must face you soon before God's great bar, and shall your blood be laid to my door? Shall you perish, and must I perish with you for unfaithfulness? May God forbid it! Now may he

“Let you see your lost estate,
 And save you ere it be too late,
 Wake you to righteousness.”
 Lord have mercy upon you all for Jesus' sake!

A Psalm of Remembrance

A Sermon

(No. 253)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 22nd, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.”—1 John 4:16.

IT IS VERY pleasant to read descriptions of the Holy Land from observant travellers, who, in glowing language, have depicted its interesting scenes. I must confess, that all books which speak of the land where Jesus lived and died have an attraction for me; but how much more delightful must it be, to journey there one's-self, to stand on the very spot where Jesus preached and prayed, and to kneel upon that blood-stained garden of Gethsemane, in which he sweat that sacred sweat of blood. I can scarcely imagine what must be the sensation of a true Christian, when he stands on Calvary, that spot of all others most dear to the believer's soul. All the descriptions that the traveller can possibly give, can never awaken the emotions which would be felt if we were really there ourselves. Now, this law of nature I would transfer to matters of grace. Let me tell you this day what I may concerning the acts of God's goodness in the souls of his people, my description will be dullness itself compared with the glorious reality. If God should lend me help, so that I could, in glowing pictures, pourtray the amazing love of Christ Jesus to those who believe in him; if I could tell you of their matchless experience, their divine drinkings at the fountain of life and bliss, their heavenly feastings in the banquetting-house, all this would be nothing, compared with what you would feel, if you yourself could taste, and handle, and see, and know, and believe.

Let me add another figure to render this truth yet more apparent. Suppose an eloquent foreigner, from a sunny clime, should endeavour to make you appreciate the fruits of his nation. He depicts them to you. He describes their luscious flavour, their cooling juice, their delicious sweetness; but how powerless will be his oration, compared with your vivid remembrance, if you have yourself partaken of the dainties of his land. It is even so with the good things of God; describe them as we may, we cannot awaken in you the joy and delight that is felt by the man who lives upon them, who makes them his daily food, his manna from heaven, and his water from the rock. 'Tis feeling, 'tis tasting, 'tis actually receiving and enjoying, which is, after all, the highest oratory with which we can possibly explain to you the sweet and precious things of God.

Now, do you not see that John could specially speak with power, for he spake from his own experience. And do you not perceive that his language cannot be understood, except we put ourselves in his position, and are able to echo his words, when he said, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us?” There are many here, I doubt not, who can join in this declaration of the apostle. And may the Holy Spirit help me, while I endeavour to draw out an expression of grateful thanks from those who have believed and known the love which God hath to them.

First, then, I shall look upon my text as being *an abstract of Christian experience*; secondly, I shall view it as *the summary of Christian testimony*; and after that, I shall regard it as *the groundwork of Christian encouragement*.

I. First of all, we have before us here, THE ABSTRACT OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE: Some will demur to this. If you should bring some Christians up and say, "Come now, just tell us in a few words what you think of the Christian life;" they would begin with a deep fetched groan, and then with the slightest possible allusion to mercy they would pass on to describe their continual exercises of soul, their deep afflictions, their desperate adversities, and their tremendous corruptions, and then they would end with another groan. But I think the healthy Christian, if he is asked this question,—“Now can you possibly give in one short sentence a statement of your Christian experience?” would come forward joyously, and say “I will say nothing about myself, but I will speak to the honour of my God, and I am sweetly constrained to affirm, that *'I have known and have believed the love that God hath to me,'*” That would be his abstract of experience, and the very best I am sure that any child of God can present. It *is* true that we have our trials, but it is just as true that we are delivered out of them. It *is* true that we have our corruptions, and mournfully do we know this to be the fact; but it is just as true that we have an all-sufficient Saviour, who overcomes these corruptions, and enables us to tread the dragon beneath our feet. In looking back we dare not say that we have not passed the den of leopards. It would be wrong if we were to deny that we have floundered through the slough of despond, and have crept along the valley of humiliation, but we can say we have been *through* them; we have not remained in them; we have not left our bones bleaching in the burning sun, nor our bodies to be the prey of the lion. Our sorrows have been the heralds of mercies. Our griefs cannot mar the melody of our praise, for we reckon them to be the deep bass notes of our song. The deeper our troubles the louder our thanks to God, who has assuredly led his servants through all and hath preserved us until now. Our past troubles are no disturbers of our happy worship; they do but swell the stream of our grateful affection. We put down all our trials into the account, but still we declare our one uncontradicted avowal, that “we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.”

You will observe the distinction which the apostle makes. I may not be able clearly to bring it out, but it struck my mind as being a very beautiful description of the Christian's two-fold experience. Sometimes he *knows* the love that God has to him and at other times he *believes* it. There is a difference here: I hope I shall be able to make it plain.

1. Sometimes the Christian knows the love of God to him, I will mention two or three particular ways in which he knows it.

Sometimes he knows it by *seeing* it. He goes to his house and he finds it stored with plenty—“his bread is given him and his water is sure.” The secret of God is upon his tabernacle, the Almighty is with him, and his children are about him. He washes his steps with butter, and the rocks pour him out rivers of oil. His root is spread out by the river, and the dew lieth all night upon his branch; his glory is fresh in him, and his bow is renewed in his hand. He is blessed in his going out and in his coming in; he hath the blessings of heaven above, and of “the deep which lieth under.” He is like Job; the Lord hath set a hedge about him, and all that he possesseth. Now, truly, he can say, “I know the love of God to me, for I can see it. I can see a gracious providence pouring forth out of the cornucopia of providence,—an abundance of all that my soul can desire.” This, however, might not completely convince him of God's love if it were not that he has also a consciousness that these things are not given him as husks are cast to swine, but they are bestowed on him as love-tokens from a tender God. His ways please the Lord, and therefore he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. The man at such a time has a joyous spirit; when he reads the Scripture it is one great transparency from beginning to end; when he meditates upon its pages it is like a

bracelet set about with the rarest jewels. He goes about his Master's service, and the Lord makes him successful. He sows and he reaps, he ploughs, and the furrows team with plenty; the sower overtakes the reaper, and the reaper overtakes the sower. God gives him many harvests in a year. The work of his hands is established, and his labour of love is accepted. The Lord hath made him exceeding rich, he hath blessed Him, and his cup runs over; he hath all that heart can desire. "Now," he says, "I know the goodness of God." This, truly, is very easy work, and yet easy though it be, we ought not to forget that we have had such seasons, we have had many trials, but, in the desert of our trial, we have had sometimes an oasis like this; we can look back to some sunny spot when we could say, "Surely the arms of love are round about me both temporally and spiritually." "He hath set me upon a rock, and established my goings." Then the Christian *knows* the love of God.

Another time in which he knows his Father's love is, when he *sees* it after coming out of affliction. He hath been sore sick, and while he has been on his bed he has been vexed with anxious thoughts concerning those he might leave behind, or even about himself. In the hour of languishing he cried to the Lord for deliverance; and at last he felt the young blood leaping through his veins anew. New health was restored to him, and he trod the green sward again with light, elastic steps, singing, "The Lord hath heard my cry, like Hezekiah, and has lengthened my days. Now I know the love which God hath to me." Or else he has incurred great losses in business. One after another the curtains of his habitation were rent, the cords were cut in twain, and all the tent pins pulled up by the invading enemy; he thought at last that nothing would be left him, "Surely I shall die in poverty," says he, for bankruptcy stares him in the face. But anon the tide is changed, the keel of his ship almost grated on the gravel, but now it begins to float, and boldly he spreads his sails, and gallantly he rides the billows; now can he exclaim, "I know the love that God hath to me." He has brought his servant out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and hath again appeared to me in mercy and chased away my doubts and fears.

So also has it been with many a man when he has for years been labouring under a heavy trial and at last escapes from it. Look at old Jacob. I believe that all his life long he would have put in a demurrer against what I have just declared, viz., that this is a summary of Christian experience. He would have said, "No, young man, I tell you it is not; my experience has been one of trouble and trial ever since I left my Father's house." And we could tell him the reason of it too, if he particularly wished to know. But surely when at last he put his aged arms round the neck of his son Joseph, when at last he saw him ruler over all Egypt, and when his two grandchildren were brought to kneel before him to receive his blessing, the old man might have reversed what he said and no more have exclaimed, "Few and evil," but "Now I know the love that God hath towards me." As it was he did end his life with a song, and finished by praising the angel who had blessed him and kept him from all evil. Even Jacob is no exception to the great rule—that the life of God's people is a proof of the text. "We know and believe the love that God hath to us."

There are other ways in which God's children *know* their Father's love. Besides what they see there is something which they *feel*. There are times when the father takes his child into his arms, presses him to his bosom, and kisses him with the kisses of his lips. These are the fond expressions to set forth the tender communings which God hath with his children. John could say, "We have known," for he had laid his head on Jesus's bosom. He had been with him in the garden of Gethsemane, he had been with him on the mount of transfiguration, he had been with him, too, when he worked his special miracles, and therefore, from the fact that he had communion with Christ at the supper, and in his sufferings and his miracles, John might say, "We know the love that

he hath to us." And have not you and I—let us now speak from personal experience—have not *we* had fellowship with Christ? There have been times when we were not nearer to ourselves than we were to God, when we were as assured that we were having fellowship with him as a man talketh with his friend; as sure, I say, as we were of our own existence. Bitter though we sometimes think that our lives have been, yet have there been periods in them akin to heaven, when we could say, "If this is not glory it is next door to it. If I am not on the other side Jordan, at least my Master is on this side of it. If I have not yet been permitted to walk the golden streets, yet these very streets on earth have been trodden by heavenly footsteps while I have walked with God." Times there have been when a Christian would not have changed his blest estate for an angel's wing of fire. He has felt that he was with Christ, and was as certain of it as if he had seen his pierced hands and his feet. Then could he say, "Now I *know* the love that God hath towards me."

And at times, too, there has been another knowledge, not so high, perhaps, as communion, bringing with it less of rapture and ecstasy, but not less of solid consolation: I mean the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirit, that we are born of God. I am no believer in those dreams and visions with which many persons mar their experience. I do not believe in those tales I hear people tell about hearing a voice, or seeing an angel. Such things happen now and then—*now* and *then*; but when we are overdone with them, we begin to suspect them to be utterly false. But I speak not as a fanatic or enthusiast when I testify that there is such a thing as an express revelation, made by the Holy Spirit to the individual man. Besides, this written Word of God, which is that on which we rely, as a sure word of testimony, whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. There is, besides this I say, another, a distinct, decided, infallible utterance of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man, when he beareth witness with our spirit that we are born of God, and at such times—and I will not stop to explain how it is; for the natural man would not understand me, and the spiritual man knoweth already—at such times the believer says, "Now I *know* the love that God hath to me." If the devil himself in person should meet the believer when he hath this witness, and tell him that God did not love him, he would call him a liar to his face, and say, "The Spirit of God has told me so, and I will believe the Spirit of God, and I will not believe thee, thou liar from the beginning, thou father of lies." Now, this is a very joyous part of the believer's experience, that both by sight and by feeling, and by distinct inward witnessing, he can often say, "I *know* the love that God bath towards me."

2. But times there are of thick darkness, when neither sun nor moon appear for many days; when the tempest rages exceedingly, and two seas meet in dread collision. There are seasons when the Christian, dismasted and dismantled, drifts before the storm a miserable hulk, unable to grasp the rudder or to man the yards. All strength and hope are gone. He looks upward, but he sees no helper; downward, and he beholds nothing but the uttermost depths of despair; around him there is nought but terror, and all about him everything frowneth dismay. At such a time, noble is the Christian who can say, "Now it may be I do not *know* the love that God hath to me, but I *believe* it. Now I believe it," saith he: "Yes, roll on ye waves; tell me that ye shall engulf me, but I believe not you. He who hath promised to preserve me—him I believe, and on his love will I rely, even though now I see no proof of it. Now, poor vessel, drift before the storm; and you, ye rocks, roar yonder with your sounding breakers; but I fear not you, for I *believe* the love of God towards me. I cannot be wrecked completely. Driven before the storm I may be; half a wreck and tempest-tossed I am, but wholly lost I never can be; and now this day, in the teeth of evidence, in opposition to everything which goes against it, now I *believe* the love which God hath for me."

The first position, that of knowing God's love, is the sweetest, but that of believing God's love, is the grandest. To feel God's love is very precious, but to believe it when you do not feel it, is the noblest. He may be but a little Christian who knows God's love, but he is a great Christian who believes it, when the visible contradicts it, and the invisible withholds its witness. No one so grand as that prophet, who sees the olive wither, the fig-tree blasted, the vines devoured by the caterpillar, the stalls emptied, and the flocks destroyed, who sees famine staring him in the face, and yet rejoices in the Lord. Oh, that is honouring God. Ye that believe him in the sunshine, ye offer him pence; but ye that believe him in the storm, ye pay him pounds. No revenue so rich as that which comes from the fat yet seemingly barren land of affliction; God gets no honour greater than that which he receives from the trustful faith, of a cast down but not destroyed believer. Blessed is he who is perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, who is poor, yet, by his faith, maketh many rich; who hath nothing yet possesseth all things; who cries, "I can do nothing," and yet can add, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

And now, do not these two states make up a summary of Christian experience? "We *know* and *believe* the love that God hath to us." "Ah," says one "we have sometimes doubted it." No, I will leave that. You may insert it in your confession, but I will not put it into my song. Confess your doubts, but write them not in this our psalm of praise. I am sure, in looking back, you will say, "Oh how foolish I was ever to doubt a faithful and unchanging God." Bring all your doubts and fears this day; hew them in pieces like Agag before the Lord, let not one escape; take them and hang them up upon a tree till evening, and then take a great stone and set it at the mouth of their sepulchre that they may rise no more. Oh for grace from this day forward to say, "When I know not my Father's love, I will believe it, and when I have his presence, then will I sing aloud 'I know that love which he hath towards me.'" This, then, is my first head.

II. The second is,—this text is A SUMMARY OF THE BELIEVER'S TESTIMONY. Every Christian is to be a testifier. Everything that God has made speaks of him. One speaks of his power, another of his majesty. The rolling sea, and the bespangled sky, both tell of his power and of his strength. Others tell of his wisdom; some of his goodness. But the saint has a peculiar testimony. He is to be a witness with heart and lips. All the other creatures speak not with words. They may sing as they shine, but they cannot sing vocally. It is the believer's part in the great eternal chorus to lift up voice and heart at once, and as an intelligent, living, loving, learning witness, to testify to God. Now I think I can say, or rather, I will speak for the thousands of Israel gathered here this morning,—*we* can say our testimony to an unbelieving world, and to poor despairing sinners, is just this,—"*we know and have believed the love that God hath toward us.*" This is our testimony, and we desire to tell it everywhere as long as we live; and, dying, we hope we shall be enabled to repeat it with our last labouring breath. We will say, when life is finished, and eternity begins, "*we have known and have believed the love that God hath towards us.*"

Let me enlarge, however, upon this testimony; and in the presence of many who know nothing of God, let me give an outline of the full testimony of every believer.

In the first place we have known that God's love to us is *undeserved*. This we can tell you with the tears in our eyes.

"There was nothing in us that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight.
'Twas even so Father, we ever must sing,
For so it seem'd good in thy sight."

Our astonishment increases every hour when we think of his love to us, for there was nothing in us that could have caused it. Often have we asked ourselves the question:—

“Why was I made to hear thy voice
 And enter while there’s room
 When thousands make a wretched choice,
 And rather starve than come?”
 and our only answer is—
 “‘Twas the same love that spread the feast,
 That sweetly forced us in;
 Else we had still refused to taste
 And perish’d in our sin.”

Ye poor sinners, ye think that there must be something in you before God can love you. Our testimony is, that God hath loved us; we are sure of this, and we do not speak half-heartedly, when we declare that we are equally sure that there never was anything in us by nature that he could love. We may doubt a great many doctrines, but we cannot doubt this. This is a matter of fact, that in us, that is, in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. We have known and have believed that the love of God towards us is free, sovereign, undeserved, and springs entirely from the overflowing love of his own heart, and is not caused by anything in us.

Another thing we can bear testimony to, is this—that the love of God is *unconquerable*. This is my witness, and the witness of all the thousands here to-day. We strove against God’s love at first; Jesus knocked at the door, but we would not open to him; he invited, but we would not come; he called, but we would not hearken. We can say with deepest grief we treated our best friend most shamefully. He knocked at our door in the night with his hair wet with dew and his locks filled with the drops of the night, but we regarded him not. In sloth and pride we still kept the bed of indolence and self confidence, and we would not rise to let him in. And we can testify, that if his love could have been conquered, we should have conquered it; for we shot out the envenomed shafts of ingratitude, we held up against him perpetually the shield of our hard-heartedness, and if he could have been overcome, if he were not an Almighty Saviour, we should have defeated him, and have been still his enemies. Ye sinners, we can affirm that love divine is a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown.

We can yet again bear another testimony to God’s love. We can say concerning his love that it has never been diminished by all the sins we have ever committed since we believed. We have been verily guilty, and we blush to say it. We have often revolted, but we have never found him unwilling to forgive. We have gone to him laden with guilt, but we have come away with our burden removed. Oh! if God could ever cast away his people, he would have cast away me. I am sure God never turns his children out of doors, or this had been my lot long ago. I am certain of the doctrine of final perseverance, because I have persevered as long as I have. If God meant to take my name out of the covenant, he has had mighty reasons enough long ere this.

“If ever it should come to pass,
 That sheep of Christ should fall away,
 My fickle feeble soul, alas!
 Would fall a thousand times a day;
 Were not thy love as firm as free,
 Thou soon would’st take it Lord from me.”

No, we have known, we have believed the love of God to us is not to be cut asunder by our sins, nor diminished by our unworthiness.

And yet another thing we may say. We have known and we have believed the love of God to us to be perfectly *immutable*. We have changed, but he has changed never. We have doubted him; but when we believed not he has remained faithful. We have sometimes been in the greatest depths, but never too low for his long arm to reach. We have sometimes, it is true, run so far from him that we could not see *him*, but he could always see us. We have never found an end to his all-sufficiency, or, a limit to his omnipotence. We have never found a change in his love,

“Immutable his will,
 Though dark may be my grave;
 His loving heart is still
 Unchangably the same.
 My soul through many changes goes;
 His love no variation knows.”

We have known this. We have tasted and handled this. We are not to be argued out of it. We are sure it is true. God is immutable. Because he has been immutable; to us, so far, “we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.”

I will make but one other remark here, and that is, we can bear our willing witness that the love of God to us has been an unfailing support in all our trials. I cannot speak as a grey-headed man of the storms and troubles which many of you have endured; but I have had more joys and more sorrows in the last few years than any man in this place, for my life has been compressed as with a Bramah press—a vast mass of emotion into one year. I have gone to the very bottoms of the mountains, as some of you know, in a night that never can be erased from my memory, a night connected with this place. I have had to pass also through severe suffering and trial from the calumny and scorn of man, with abuse hailed pitilessly on my head. And I have had to pass through severe personal bodily pain. But as far as my witness goes, I can say that he is able to save unto the uttermost and in the last extremity, and he has been a good God to me. Unfaithful I have been; he has forgiven that, and will forgive; but unfaithful to me he never has been; and if I had the choosing of the rest of my life I would not choose, but let him map my way to the end as he has done until now, for “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” As for you grey-headed men now present, what tales you could tell. You remember the many deliverances you have had under your sharp afflictions. You have seen a wife buried, but you have seen your God living. You have seen your children carried one after another to the tomb, but you have been able to say “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be his name.” You have had your dearest friends sundered from you, but still have said:

“How can I bereaved be
 Since I cannot part with thee.”

You have had attacks of Satan, you have had doubts and fears—you have been assailed by men, by earth and by hell, but you can say—

“When trouble like a gloomy cloud
 Hath gathered thick and thundered loud;
 He near my soul has always stood,
 His loving kindness, O how good.”

Your testimony is without a flaw. Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God has promised, he has never left you, never forsaken you. But to this day you can say, glory be unto the name of an unchanging God, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.

III. And now the last point is—the practical use of this great truth. It is the ground work of christian encouragement. Will you just think that I am coming down out of the pulpit now to you. I cannot perform much pastoral visitation in going from house to house, and so let us do it wholesale this morning, and may the Spirit of God make it a reality.

Dear brothers and sisters, there are some of you here to day who have been very much and very sorely tried, for your path has been through fire and through water. You are servants o God, and in looking back you can say that you have been helped hitherto. Just now your health and your spirits are failing you; you are brought very low indeed. Permit your minister to take hold of your hand, and look you in the face. My dear brother, will you dishonour your God now? You say, “No, God forbid that I should dishonour him.” My dear friend, you have now before you a noble opportunity—an opportunity which an angel might well envy you; you have a noble opportunity of honouring God in the fire. I will not speak lightly of your troubles; I will suppose them to be just as great as you say they are. But will you glorify him in them all? Come, you have trusted him many times, will you trust him now? Perhaps Satan has a commission from on high to try you, and sift you in his sieve. He has been before God, and your Lord has said to him, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” “Ah,” says Satan, “he serves thee now, but thou hast set a hedge about him and blessed him, let me but touch him,” and he has come down to you, and he has afflicted you in your estate, afflicted you in your family, and at last he has afflicted you in your body. Shall Satan be the conqueror? shall grace give way? O my dear brother, stand up now and say once more, once for all, “I tell thee, Satan, the grace of God is more than a match for thee; he is with me, and in all this I will not utter one word against the Lord my God. He doeth all things well—well, even now, and I do rejoice in him.”

The Lord is always pleased with his children when they can stand up for him when circumstances seem to belie him. Here come the witnesses into court. The devil says, “Soul, God has forgotten thee, I will bring in my witness.” First he summons your debts—a long bill of losses. “There,” says he, “would God suffer you to fall thus, if he loved you?” Then he brings in your children—either their death, or their disobedience, or something worse, and says, “Would the Lord suffer these things to come upon you, if he loved you?” At last he brings in your poor tottering body, and all your doubts and fears, and the hidings of Jehovah’s face. “Ah,” says the devil, “do you believe that God loves you now ?” Oh, it is noble, if you are able to stand forth and say to all these witnesses, “I hear what you have to say, let God be true, and every man and everything be a liar; I believe none of you. You all say, God does not love me; but he does, and if the witnesses against his love were multiplied a hundredfold, yet still would I say, “I know whom I have believed.”

“I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power,
What I’ve committed to his hands,
'Till the decisive hour;”

He will bring me safe to heaven at last, unhurt by the way.

I have but one other use to make of my text. In this large assembly, composed of so great a multitude of men, there are doubtless some who are saying, “I cannot think that God would have mercy on such a sinner as I am.” “I cannot conceive,” says another one, “though I know my guilt,

I cannot conceive that the love of God can blot out such iniquity as mine.” Permit me to take your hand, and if mine is not enough I could take you around these galleries, and down here, and I could give you hundreds of hands, and hundreds of lips should speak and say, “Sinner, never think that the love of God can be exceeded, or destroyed, by your sin, for *I* obtained mercy,” and round the gallery the sound would go if this were a gospel chorus—“and I,” “and I,” “and I,” and you might go up to the brother, and say, “What were you?” “I was a drunkard;” says one. “I was a swearer, I cursed God ;” says another, “I loved the pugilistic ring, and the skittle ground;” says another; “I was a whoremonger, an adulterer, and yet God has forgiven me,” and O how sweetly would we all sing in chorus, concerning the power of Christ to save, for we have all in our measure felt its might.

Now, my dear friend I take your hand, and I say, “We have known and have believed the love that God hath to us,” and *we* are the very chief of sinners ourselves. Will you honour God by believing that he is able to save you through the blood of Christ, for if the Lord now enables you to honour him in believing, depend upon it, he has begun a good work in you and has set his heart upon you. Sinners, believe that God is love. O trust him who gave his Son to die. He will deny you nothing. If you ask with humble faith, you shall assuredly receive. Our witness is given; reject it not. “We have known, we have believed the love that God hath to us.”

The Wounds of Jesus

A Sermon

(No. 254)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, January 30th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“He shewed them his hands and his feet.”—Luke 24:40.

I HAVE selected this sentence as the text, although I shall not strictly adhere to it. What was to be seen on Christ's hands and feet? We are taught that the prints of the nails were visible, and that in his side there was still the gash of the spear. For did he not say to Thomas? “Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.” I wish to draw your attention to the ample fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ, when he rose again from the dead had in his body the marks of his passion. If he had pleased he could readily have removed them. He rose again from the dead, and he might have erased from his body everything which could be an indication of what he had suffered and endured before he descended into the tomb. But, no! Instead thereof, there were the pierced hands and feet, and there was the open side. What was the reason for this? There was no absolute necessity for it: it could easily have been dispensed with, What, then, were the reasons? I shall endeavor to enter into this subject, and I hope we may draw some profitable instructions therefrom.

First, *what influence did the exhibition of the hands and feet have upon the disciples?* Secondly, *why is it that Jesus Christ, now in heaven, bears with him the scars in his flesh?* And, then, thirdly, *is there any lesson to us in the fact that Jesus Christ still wears his wounds?* I think there is.

I. First, then, OF WHAT USE WAS THE EXHIBITION OF THOSE WOUNDS TO THE DISCIPLES? I reply at once that they were infallible proofs that he was the same person. He said, “Behold my hands and feet, that it is, I, myself.” It was to establish his identity, that he was the very same Jesus whom they had followed, whom at last they had deserted, whom they had beheld afar off crucified and slain, and whom they had carried to the tomb in the gloom of the evening; it was the very same Christ who was now before them, and they might know it, for there was the seal of his sufferings upon him. He was the same person; the hands and feet could testify to that. You know, beloved, had not some such evidence been visible upon our Saviour, it is probable that his disciples would have been unbelieving enough to doubt the identity of his person. Have you never seen men changed, extremely changed in their external appearance. I have known a man, perhaps, five or six years ago; he has passed through a world of suffering and pain, and when I have seen him again, I have declared, “I should not have known you if I had met you in the street.” Now, when the disciples parted with Jesus it was at the Lord's Supper. They then walked with him into the garden. There did the Saviour sweat, “as it were great drops of blood.” Do you not imagine that such a wrestling, such a bloody sweat as that, must have had some effect upon his visage. It had surely had enough to mar it before. But now the ploughshares of grief were sharpened, and anguish made deep furrows upon him. There must have been lines of grief upon his brow, deeper than they had ever seen before. This would have produced a change great enough to make them forget his countenance. Nor was this all. You know he had to undergo the flagellation at the pillar of the

Praetorium, and then to die. Can you imagine that a man could pass through the process of death, through such astonishing agony as that which the Saviour endured, and yet that there should be no change in his visible appearance? I can conceive that in passing through such a furnace as this, the very lineaments of Christ's face would seem to have been melted, and would have need to be restructed ere the disciples could discern that he was the same.

Besides that? when Jesus rose, he rose, you know, as he now sits in heaven. His body was flesh and bone, but, nevertheless, it had miraculous powers; it was capable of entering into a room without the ordinary modes of access. We find our Saviour standing in the midst of his disciples, the doors being shut. I believe that Jesus had a body such as we are to have in the next world. Jesus Christ was not a phantom or spectra. His body was not a spirit; it was a real body. And so in heaven imagine not that we are to be spirits. We are to be spirits until the great resurrection day; but, *then*, our spirit is afterwards to receive a spiritual body; it is to be clothed upon; it is not for ever to be a naked, bodiless spirit. That body will be to all intents and purposes the same body which shall be laid in the tomb. *It* is sown in dishonor, and the same *it* is raised in glory: *it* is sown in weakness, and the same *it* is raised in power. Mark, Jesus was flesh still! All flesh is not the same flesh: all bodies have not the same qualities. So our Saviour's flesh was flesh that could not suffer,—flesh that had extraordinary powers about it,—flesh however, that could eat, although it was under no necessity to do so. And such may be the body, the glorified body, which shall be given to us when we shall rise at the first resurrection, and shall be made like unto our head. But, now, think! If Christ had to undergo in his countenance those matchless transformations, that must have been, first of all, connected with his bloody sweat, then, with his agony, and after that, with the transforming, or, if I may use such a word, the transmutation of his body into a spiritual body, can you not conceive that his likeness would be changed, that the disciples would scarcely know him if there had not been some deeply graven marks whereby they would be able to discover him? The disciples looked upon the very face, but, even then they doubted. There was a majesty about him which most of them had not seen. Peter, James, and John, had seen him transfigured, when his garments were whiter than any fuller could make them; but the rest of the disciples had only seen him as a man of sorrows; they had not seen him as the glorious Lord, and, therefore, they would be apt to doubt whether he was the same. But these nail-prints, this pierced side, these were marks which they could not dispute, which unbelief itself could not doubt. And they all were convinced and confessed that he was the Lord; and even faithless Thomas, was constrained to cry, "My Lord and my God!"

II. Let us turn to the second question: Why SHOULD CHRIST WEAR THESE WOUNDS IN HEAVEN AND OF WHAT AVAIL ARE THEY? Let me give you some thoughts upon the matter.

I can conceive, first, that the wounds of Christ in heaven will be a theme of eternal wonder to the angels. An old writer represents the angels as saying, "Oh, Lord of glory, what are these wounds in thy hand?" They had seen him depart from heaven, and they had gone with him as far as they might go, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth." Some of them had watched him through his pilgrimage, for "he was seen of angels." But when he returned, I doubt not that they crowded round him, bowed before him in adoration, and then put the holy question, "What are these wounds in thy hand?" At any rate they were enabled to behold for themselves in heaven the man who suffered, and they could see the wounds which were produced in his body by his sufferings; and I can readily imagine that this would cause them to lift their songs higher, would prolong their shouts of triumph, and would cause them to adore him with a rapture of wonderment, such as they had never felt before. And I doubt not that every time they look upon his hands, and behold the

crucified man exalted by his Father's side, they are afresh wrapt in wonder, and again they strike their harps with more joyous lingers at the thought of what he must have suffered who thus bears the scars of his hard-fought battles.

Again, Christ wears these scars in his body in heaven as his ornaments. The wounds of Christ are his glories, they are his jewels and his precious things. To the eye of the believer Christ is never so glorious, never so passing fair, as when we can say of him, "My beloved is white and ruddy," white with innocence, and ruddy with his own blood. He never seems so beautiful as when he can see him as the rose and the lily; as the lily, matchless purity, and as the rose, crimsoned with his own gore. We may talk of Christ in his beauty, in divers places raising the dead and stilling the tempest, but oh! there never was such a matchless Christ as he that did hang upon the cross. There I behold all his beauties, all his attributes developed, all his love drawn out, all his character expressed in letters so legible, that even my poor stammering heart call read those lines and speak them out again, as I see them written in crimson upon the bloody tree. Beloved, these are to Jesus what they are to us; they are his ornaments, his royal jewels, his fair array. He does not care for the splendor and pomp of kings. The thorny crown is his diadem—a diadem such as no monarch ever wore. It is true that he bears not now the scepter of reed, but there is a glory in it that there never flashed from scepter of gold. It is true he is not now buffeted and spit upon: his face is not now marred more than that of any other man by grief and sorrow, for he is glorified and full of blessedness; but he never seems so lovely as when we see him buffeted of men for our sakes, enduring all manner of grief, bearing our iniquities, and carrying our sorrows. Jesus Christ finds such beauties in his wounds that he will not renounce them, he will wear the court dress in which he wooed our souls, and he will wear the royal purple of his atonement throughout eternity.

Nor are these only the ornaments of Christ: they are his *trophies*—the trophies of his love. Have you never seen a soldier with a gash across his forehead or in his cheek? Why every soldier will tell you the wound in battle is no disfigurement—it is his honor. "If" said he, "I received a wound when I was retreating, a wound in the back, that were to my disgrace, if I have received a wound in a victory, then it is an honorable thing to be wounded." Now, Jesus Christ has scars of honor in his flesh and glory in his eyes. He has other trophies. He has divided the spoil with the strong: he has taken the captive away from his tyrant master; he has redeemed for himself a host that no man can number, who are all the trophies of his victories: but these scars, these are the memorials of the fight, and these the trophies, too.

For do you not know it was from the side of Jesus that Death sucked its death. Jesus did hang upon the cross, and Death thought to get the victory. Aye, but in its victory it destroyed itself. There are three things in Christ that Death never met with before, all of which are fatal to it. There was in Christ *innocence*. Now; as long as man was innocent, he could not die. Adam lived as long as he was innocent. Now Christ was about to die; but Death sucked in innocent blood; he sucked in his own poison and he died. Again, *blessedness* is that which takes away the sting of death. Now Christ, even when he was dying, was "God over all, blessed for ever." All that Death had ever killed before was under the curse; but this man was never by nature under the curse, because for our sakes he was not born into this world a cursed man. He was the seed of woman it is true, but still not of carnal generation. He did come under the curse when he took upon himself our sins, but not for his own sins. He was in himself blessed. Death sucked in blessed blood: he had never done that before—all others have been under the curse—and that slew Death. It was innocence combined with blessedness that was the destruction of Death. Yet another thing. Death had never met before

with any man who had *life in himself*. But when Death drank Christ's blood it drank life. For his blood is the life of the soul, and is the seed of life eternal. Wheresoever it goeth, doth it not give life to the dead? And Death, finding that it had drunk into its own veins life in the form of Jesus' blood gave up the ghost; and Death itself is dead, for Christ hath destroyed it, by the sacrifice of himself; he hath put it away; he hath said, "Oh death, where is thy sting? oh grave, where is thy victory?" But now, since it was from these very wounds that Death sucked in its own death, and that hell was destroyed; since these were the only weapons of a weaponless Redeemer, he wears and bears them as his trophies in heaven. David laid up Goliath's sword before the Lord for ever. Jesus lays up his wounds before the Lord, for his wounds were his weapons, and this is why he wears them still.

I was thinking while coming here of Jesus Christ in heaven with his wounds, and another thought struck me. Another reason why Jesus wears his wounds is, that when he intercedes he may employ them as powerful advocates. When he rises up to pray for his people, he needs not speak a word; he lifts his hands before his Father's face; he makes bare his side, and points to his feet. These are the orators with which he pleads with God—these wounds. Oh, he must prevail. Do you not see that Christ without his wounds, in heaven might be potent enough. but there would not be that glorious simplicity of intercession which now you see. He has nothing to do but to shew his hands. Him the Father heareth always. His blood crieth and is heard, His wounds plead and prevail.

Let us think again. Jesus Christ appears in heaven as the wounded one, this shews again that he has not laid aside his priesthood. You know how Watts paraphrases the idea He says,

"Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still."

If the wounds had been removed we might have forgotten that there was a sacrifice; and, mayhap, next we might have forgotten that there was a priest. But the wounds are there: then there is a sacrifice, and there is a priest also, for he who is wounded is both himself, the sacrifice and the priest. The priesthood of Melchisedec is a glorious subject. He who reads that with the eye of faith, and is blessed with the Spirit, will find much cause for joy when he contrasts the priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron. The priesthood of Aaron began, and it finished; but the priesthood of Melchisedec had no beginning, and it had no end. He was, we are told, "Without beginning of days, and without end of years;" without father, without mother, without descent. Such is the priesthood of Christ' It shall never end. He himself is without beginning, and his priesthood is without end. When the last ransomed soul is brought in. when there shall be no more prayers to offer, Christ shall still be a priest. Though he has no sacrifice now to slay, for he is the sacrifice himself, "once for all," yet still he is a priest, and when all his people as the result of that sacrifice shall be assembled around his glorious throne, he shall still be the priest. "For thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." I take it that this is a further reason why he still bears his wounds in heaven.

There is another and a terrible reason why Christ wears his wounds still. It is this. Christ is coming to judge the world. Christ has with himself to-day the accusers of his enemies. Every time that Christ lifts his hands to heaven, the men that hate him, or despise him, are accused. The Jewish nation is brought in guilty every day. The cry is remembered, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and the sin of casting Christ away, and rejecting him, is brought before the mind of the Most High. And when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world in righteousness, seated on the great white throne, that hand of his shall be the terror of the universe." They shall look on him whom they have pierced," and they shall mourn for their sins. They would not mourn with

hopeful penitence in time, they shall mourn with sorrowful remorse throughout eternity. When the multitude are gathered together, when in the valley of Jehoshaphat Christ shall judge the nations, what need he to summon accusers? His own wounds are his witnesses. Why need he to summon any to convict men of sin? His own side bears their handiwork. Ye murderers, did you not do this? Ye sons of an evil generation did ye not pierce the Saviour? Did ye not nail him to the tree? Behold these holes in my hand, and this stab in my side; these are swift witnesses against you to condemn you I There is a terrible side, then to this question. A crucified Christ with his wounds still open will be a terrible sight for an assembled universe. "Well," but says one of my congregation "What is that to us? We have not crucified the Saviour." No but let me assure You that his blood shall be on you. If ye die unbelievers his blood shall be required at your hand. The death of Christ was wrought by the hand of manhood, of all and entire manhood. Others did it for you, and though you gave no consent verbally, yet you do assent in your heart every day. As long as you hate Christ you give an assent to his death. As long as you reject his sacrifice, and despise his love, you give evidence in your hearts that you would have crucified the Lord of glory had you been there. Nay, and you do yourself, so fares you can, crucify him afresh and put him to an open shame. When you laugh at his people, when you despise his word, and mock at his ordinances, you are driving nails into his hands, and thrusting the spear into his side; therefore those open hands and that pierced side shall be witnesses against *you*, even against *you*, if ye die rejecting him, and enter into eternity enemies to Christ by wicked works.

I think I have thus supplied severe excellent reasons. But now there is one more which I shall offer to your consideration before I come to the lesson which you shall learn. Christ v, ears those marks in his hands that, as believers, you may never forget that he has died. We shall need, perhaps, nothing to refresh our memories in heaven. but still' even if we should, we have it here. When we shall have been in heaven many a thousand years we shall still have the death of Christ before us, we shall see him reigning. But can you not conceive that the presence of the wounded Christ will often stir up the holy hearts of the celestial beings to a fresh outpouring of their grateful songs? They begin the song thus, "Unto him that liveth." Jesus looks upon them and shows his hand and they add, "and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death." They would not forget that he died; but certainly that part of the song where it said, "and was dead," will have all the more sweetness, because there he sits with the very marks of his passion—with the nail-prints of his crucifixion. If we shall be in heaven at all constituted as we are on earth, we shall need some visible token to keep us continually in remembrance. *Here*, you know, the most spiritual saint needs the bread and wine—sweet emblems of the Saviour's body. *There* we shall have nothing to do with emblems, for we shall have the sight of *him*. And I say, if we be in heaven anything like what we are here, I can imagine that the presence of Jesus may be highly beneficial, may be gloriously precious to the saints in reviving their love continually, and causing their hearts, which are like fountains of love, to bubble up afresh, and send out again the living water of gratitude and thanksgiving. At any rate, I know this thought is very delightful to me, that I shall see the man that did hang on Calvary's cross, and that I shall see him as he did inane there. I delight to see my Saviour in all the glories of his Father, but I long to go back and see him as he was, as well as he is. I think I should sometimes envy Peter and the rest of them that they should have seen him crucified. Yes, I should say, I see him glorified, but you saw the most marvellous sight. To see a God is an every-day sight with glorified beings, but to see a God covered with his blood, this is an extraordinary thing. To see Christ glorified, that we may see each day, but to have seen him on that

special occasion, made obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross, that was an extraordinary sight which even angels themselves could see but once. You and I cannot see that. But those wounds are there still manifest and visible, and we shall be delighted with the rapturous sight of the Lord in glory, with his wounds still fresh upon him. May the Lord grant that we may all be there to see it. May we refresh ourselves with that glorious sight. I can say that I would part with all the joys of sense to view his face. Everything that is good on earth I would give away without a wish, without one single lingering thought, if I might but behold his face, and lie in his bosom, and see the dear pierced hands and the wide-open side. We must wait his pleasure. A few more rolling suns shall do it. The moon shall rise and wane for us a few more times, and then

“We shall see his face, and never, never sin

But from the rivers of his grace, drink endless pleasures in.”

III. This brings me now to the third point. WHAT DOES CHRIST MEAN BY SHOWING TO US HIS HANDS AND FEET? He means this that suffering is absolutely necessary. Christ is the head, and his people are the members. If suffering could have been avoided, surely our glorious Head ought to have escaped; but inasmuch as he shows us his wounds, it is to tell us, that we shall have wounds too. Innocence ought to escape suffering. Did not Pilate mean as much when he said, “I find no fault in him, therefore let him go?” But innocence did not escape suffering. Even the captain of our salvation must be made perfect through suffering; therefore, we who are guilty, we who are far from being perfect, must not wonder that we have to be wounded too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and do you imagine that the other members of the body are to be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Jesus Christ swim through seas of his own blood to win the crown, and are you and I to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, the wounds of Christ are to teach us that suffering is necessary. In fact, that doctrine was taught upon Mount Calvary. There are only three sorts of men that have ever lived—a good man, a bad man, and the God-man. Now, on Calvary’s cross, I see three characters, I see the thief, the representative of the bad. I see the penitent thief, the representative of the righteous, and I see the God-man in the midst. All three must suffer. Do not imagine, for a moment, that wicked men get through this world without suffering. Oh, no. The path to hell is very rough, though it seems smooth. When men will damn themselves, they will not find it a very pleasurable task. The cutting the throat of one’s soul is not such a pleasant operation. The drinking the poison of damnation is not, after all, an enviable task. The path of the sinner may seem to be happy, but it is not. It is a gilded deceit. He knows there is bitterness in his bowels, even here on earth. Even the wicked must suffer. But, mark, if any out of the world would have escaped it would be the God-man; but the God-man did not escape. He shows us his wounds; and do you think that you shall remain unwounded? Not if you are his, at any rate. Men sometimes escape on earth; but the true-born child of God must not, and would not, if he might, for if he did, he would then give himself cause to say, “I am no part of the body; if I were a part of the body, my head suffered, and so must I suffer, for I am part of his living body.” That is the first lesson he teaches us, the necessity of suffering.

But next he teaches us his sympathy with us in our suffering. “There,” says he, “see this hand! I am not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. I have suffered, too. I was tempted in all ways like as you are. Look here! there are the marks—there are the marks. They are not only tokens of my love, they are not only sweet forget-me-nots that bind me to love you for ever. But besides that they are the evidence of my sympathy. I can feel for you. Look—look—I have suffered. Have you the heart-ache? Ah, look yon here, what a heartache I had

when this heart was pierced Do you suffer, even unto blood wrestling against sin? So did I. I have sympathy with you." It was this that sustained the early martyrs. One of them declared that while he was suffering he fixed his eyes on Christ; and when they were pinching his flesh dragging it off with the hot harrows, when they were putting him to agonies so extraordinary, that I could not dare to mention them here, lest some of you should faint even under the very narrative, he said, "My soul is not insensible but it loves." What a glorious speech was that! It loves—it loves Christ. It was not insensible, but love gave it power to overcome suffering, a power as potent as insensibility. "For," said he, "my eyes are fixed on him that suffered for me, and I can suffer for him; for my soul is in his body; I have sent my heart up unto him. He is my brother, and there my heart is. Plough my flesh, and break my bones; smash them with veer irons, I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered, and he suffers in me now; but he sympathises with me, and this makes me strong." Yes, beloved, lay hold on this in all times of your agony. When you are sweating, think of his bloody sores. When you are bruised, think of the whips that tore his flesh. And when you are aging, think of his death. And when God hides his face for a little from you, think of "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" This is why he wears his wounds in his hands, that he may show that he sympathises with you.

Another thing. Christ wears these wounds to show that suffering is an honorable thing. To suffer for Christ is glory. Men will say, "It is glorious to make others suffer." When Alexander rides over the necks of princes, and treads nations beneath his feet, that is glorious. The Christian religion teaches us it is glorious to be trodden on, glorious to be crushed, glorious to suffer. This is hard to learn. There we see it in our glorified Master. He makes his wounds his glory, and his sufferings are part of the drapery of his regal attire in Paradise. Now, then, it is an honorable thing to suffer. Oh, Christian, when you are overtaken by strange troubles, be not afraid. God is near you. It was Christ's honor to suffer, and it is yours too. The only degree that God gives to his people is the degree of "Masters in tribulation." If you would be one of God's nobles you must be knighted. Men are knighted with a blow of the sword. The Lord knights us with the sword of affliction; and when we fight hard in many a battle, he makes us barons of the kingdom of heaven, he makes us dukes and lords in the kingdom of sorrowful honor, not through honor of man, but through dishonor of man, not through joy, but through suffering, and grief, and agony, and death. The highest honor that God can confer upon his children is the blood-red crown of martyrdom. When I read, as I have been reading lately, the story of the catacombs of Rome, and those short but very pithy inscriptions that are written over the graves of the martyrs, I felt sometimes as if I could envy them. I do not envy them their racks, their hot irons, their being dragged at the heels of horses; but I do envy them when I see them arrayed in the blood-red robe of martyrdom. Who are they that stand nearest to the eternal throne, foremost of the saints in light? Why, the noble army of martyrs. And just as God shall give us grace to suffer *for* Christ, to suffer *with* Christ, and to suffer *as* Christ, just so much does he honor us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings, that God hath made, are their troubles, their sorrows, and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honored. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us, and troubles lift us.

Lastly, there is one sweet thought connected with the wounds of Christ that has charmed my soul, and made my heart run over with delight. It is this: I have sometimes thought that if I am a part of Christ's body I am a poor wounded part; if I do belong to that all-glorious whole, the church, which is his fullness, the fullness of him that filleth all in all, yet have I said within me, "I am a poor maimed part, wounded, full of putrifying sores." But Christ did not leave even his wounds

behind him, even those he took to heaven. "Not a bone of him shall be broken," and the flesh when wounded shall not be discarded,—shall not be left. He shall carry that with him to heaven, and he shall glorify even the wounded member. Is not this sweet, is not this precious to the troubled child of God? This, indeed, is a thought from which one may suck honey. Poor, weak, and wounded though I am, he will not discard me. His wounds are healed wounds, mark! they are not running sores; and so, though we be the wounded parts of Christ, we shall be healed; though we shall seem to ourselves in looking back upon what we were upon earth only as wounds, only parts of a wounded body, still we shall rejoice that he has healed those wounds, and that he has not cast us away. Precious, precious truth! The whole body he will present before his Father's face, and wounded though he be, he shall not cast his own wounds away. Let us take comfort, then, in this; let us rejoice therein. We shall be presented at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Mark, Christ's wounds are no spots to him, no wrinkles, they are ornaments; and even those parts of his church on earth that despair of themselves, thinking themselves to be as wounds shall be no spots, no wrinkles in the complete church above, but even they shall be the ornaments and the glory of Christ. Let us now look up by faith and see Jesus, the Wounded Jesus, sitting on his throne. Will not this help us to gird up our loins to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

I cannot send you away without this last remark. Poor sinner, thou art troubled on account of sin. There is a sweet thought for thee. Men are afraid to go to Christ, or else they say, "My Sins are so many I cannot go to him; he will be angry with me." Do you see his hands outstretched to you to night? He is in heaven, and he still says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are you afraid to come? Then, look at his hand—look at his hand, will not that induce you? "Oh," but you say, "I cannot think that Christ can have it in his heart to remember such a worm as I." Look at his side, there is easy access to his heart. His side is open, and even your poor prayers may be thrust into that side, and they shall reach his heart, holy though it be. Only do thou look to his wounds, and thou shalt certainly find peace through the blood of Jesus. There were two monks of late years in different cells in their convent. They were reading the Bible. One of them found Christ while reading the Scriptures, and he believed with a true evangelical faith. The other one was timid, and could scarcely think it true; the scheme of salvation seemed so great to him he could scarcely lay hold upon it. But, at last, he lay upon the point to die, and he sent for the other to come and sit by him, and to shut the door; because if the superior had heard of that of which they were about to speak, he might have condemned them both. When the monk had sat down, the sick man began to tell how his sins lay heavy on him; the other reminded him of Jesus. "If you would be saved, brother, you must look to Jesus who did hang upon the cross. His wounds must save." The poor man heard and he believed. Almost immediately afterwards came in the superior, with the brethren and the priests; and they began to grease him in extreme unction. This poor man tried to push them away; he could not bear the ceremony, and as well as he could he expressed his dissent. At last his lips were opened, and he said in Latin, "*Tu vulnera Jesu!*"—thy wounds, oh Jesus! thy wounds, oh Jesus!—clasped his hands, lifted them to heaven, fell back and died. Oh, I would that many a Protestant would die with these words on his lips. There was the fullness of the gospel in them. Thy wounds, oh Jesus! thy wounds; these are my refuge in my trouble. Oh sinner, may you be helped to believe in his wounds! They cannot fail; Christ's wounds must heal those that put their trust in him.

Justice Satisfied

A Sermon

(No. 255)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 29th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”—Romans 3:26.

“Just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—1 John 1:9.

WHEN THE SOUL is seriously impressed with the conviction of its guilt, when terror and alarm get hold upon it concerning the inevitable consequences of its sin, the soul is afraid of God. It dreads at that time every attribute of divinity. But most of all the sinner is afraid of God's justice. “Ah,” saith he to himself, “God is a just God; and if so, how can he pardon my sins? for my iniquities cry aloud for punishment, and my transgressions demand that his right hand should smite me low. How can I be saved? Were God unjust, he might forgive: but, alas! he is not so, he is severely just. ‘He layeth justice to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.’ He is the judge of all the earth, and he must do right. How then can I escape from his righteous wrath which must be stirred up against me?” Let us be assured that the sinner is quite right in the conviction that there is here a great difficulty. The justice of God is in itself a great barrier to the salvation of sinners. There is no possibility for that barrier to be surmounted, nor even for it to be removed except by one means, which shall this day be proclaimed unto you through the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is true that God is just. Let old Sodom tell you how God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon man's iniquity. Let a drowning world tell you how God lifted the sluices of the fountains of the great deep, and bade the bubbling waters spring up and swallow up man alive. Let the earth tell you; for she opened her mouth when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against God. Let the buried cities of Nineveh, and the tattered relics of Tyre and Sidon, tell you that God is just, and will by no means spare the guilty. And direst of all, let hell's bottomless lake declare what is the awful vengeance of God against the sins of man. Let the sighs, and groans, and moans, and shrieks of spirits condemned of God, rise in your ears, and bear witness that he is a God who will not spare the guilty, who will not wink at iniquity, transgression, and sin, but who will have vengeance upon every rebel, and will give justice its full satisfaction for every offence.

The sinner is right in his conviction that God is just, and he is moreover right in the inference which follows from it, that because God is just his sin must be punished. Ah, sinner, if God punish not thy sin, he has ceased to be what he has always been—the severely just, the inflexibly righteous. Never has there been a sin pardoned, absolutely and without atonement, since the world began. There has never been an offense yet remitted by the great Judge of heaven, until the law has received the fullest vindication. You are right, O convicted sinner, that such shall be the case even to the end. Every transgression shall have its just recompense of reward. For every offence there shall be its stroke, and for every iniquity there shall be its doom. “Ah,” now says the sinner, “then I am shut out of heaven. If God be just and he must punish sin, then what can I do? Justice, like some dark angel, strides across the road of mercy, and with his sword drawn, athirst for blood and winged to slay, he strides across my path, and threatens to drive me backwards over the precipice of death

into the ever-burning lake." Sinner, thou art right; it is even so. Except through the gospel which I am about to preach to thee, justice is thine antagonist, thy lawful, irresistible, and insatiable enemy. It cannot suffer thee to enter heaven, for thou hast sinned; and punished that sin must be, avenged that transgression must be, as long as God is God—the holy and the just.

Is it possible, then, that the sinner cannot be saved? This is the great riddle of the law, and the grand discovery of the gospel. Wonder ye heavens! be astonished O earth! that very justice which stood in the sinner's way and prevented his being pardoned, has been by the gospel of Christ appeased; by the rich atonement offered upon Calvary, justice is satisfied, has sheathed its sword, and has now not a word to say against the pardon of the penitent. Nay, more, that justice once so angry, whose brow was lightning, and whose voice was thunder, has now become the sinner's advocate, and itself with its mighty voice pleads with God, that whosoever confesses his sin should be pardoned and be cleansed from all unrighteousness.

The business of this morning shall be to show, in the first place, according to the first text, *how justice is no longer the sinner's enemy*—"God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth;" and then, in the second place, *that justice has become the sinner's advocate*, and that "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But here let me utter a caution; I shall speak this morning, only to those who feel their guilt, and who are ready to confess their sin. For to those who still love sin, and will not acknowledge their guilt, there is no promise of mercy or pardon. For them there remains nothing but the fearful looking for of judgment. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his heart shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." The soul that neglects this great salvation cannot escape; there is no door of escape provided for it. Unless the Lord has now brought us to feel our need of mercy, has compelled us to confess that unless he gives us mercy we must righteously perish, and unless, moreover, he has made us willing now to be saved on any terms, so that we may be saved at all, this gospel which I am about to preach is not ours. But if we be convinced of sin and are now trembling before the thunders of God's wrath, every word that I am now about to speak will be full of encouragement and consolation to you.

I. First, then, HOW HAS JUSTICE BEEN PUT ASIDE? or rather, HOW HAS IT BEEN SO SATISFIED THAT IT NO LONGER STANDS IN THE WAY OF GOD'S JUSTIFYING THE SINNER?

The one answer to that is, Justice has been satisfied through the substitution of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. When man sinned the law demanded that man must be punished. The first offense of man was committed by Adam, who was the representative of the entire race. When God would punish sin, in his own infinite mind he thought of the blessed expedient, not of punishing his people, but of punishing their representative, the covenant head, the second Adam. It was by one man, the first man, that sin entered into the world, and death by sin. It was by another man, the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, it was by him that this sin was borne; by him its punishment was endured; by him the whole wrath of heaven was suffered. And through that second representative of manhood, Jesus, the second Adam, God is now able and willing to forgive the vilest of the vile, and justify even the ungodly, and he is able to do so without the slightest violation of his justice. For, mark, when Jesus Christ the Son of God suffered on the tree, he did not suffer for himself. He had no sin, either natural or actual. He had done nothing whatever that could bring him under the ban of heaven, or subject his holy soul and his perfect body to grief and pain. When he suffered it was as a substitute. He died—"the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Had his sorrows been personally deserved they would have had no efficacy in them. But inasmuch as for sins not his own he died to atone; inasmuch as he was punished, not for any guilt that he had done or could do, but for the guilt incurred by others, there was a merit and an efficacy in all that he suffered, by which the law was satisfied, and God is able to forgive.

Let us show very briefly how fully the law is satisfied.

1. Note first the dignity of the victim who offered himself up to divine justice. Man had sinned; the law required the punishment of manhood. But Jesus, the eternal Son of God, “very God of very God,” who had been hymned through eternal ages by joyous angels, who had been the favourite of his Father’s court, exalted high above principalities and powers, and every name that is named, he himself condescended to become man; was born of the Virgin Mary; was cradled in a manger; lived a life of suffering, and at last died a death of agony. If you will but think of the wondrous person whom Jesus was—as very God of very God, king of angels, creator, preserver, Lord of all—I think you will see that in his sufferings, the law received a greater vindication than it could have done even in the sufferings of all the men that have ever lived or ever could live. If God had consumed the whole human race, if all the worlds that float in ether had been sacrificed as one mighty holocaust to the vengeance of the law, it would not have been so well vindicated as when Jesus died. For the deaths of all men and all angels would have been but the deaths and sufferings of creatures; but when Jesus died, the Creator himself underwent the pang, it was the divine preserver of the world hanging on the cross. There is such dignity in the Godhead, that all it does is marvellous and infinite in its merit; and when he stooped to suffer, when he bowed his awful head, cast aside his diadem of stars to have his brow girt about with thorns; when his hands that once swayed the sceptre of all worlds were nailed to the tree; when his feet that erst had pressed the clouds, when these were fastened to the wood, then did the law receive an honour such as it never could have received if a whole universe in one devouring conflagration had blazed and burned for ever.

2. In the next place, just pause and think of the relationship which Jesus Christ had towards the great judge of all the earth, and then you will see again that the law must have been fully satisfied thereby. We hear of Brutus that he was the most inflexible of law-givers; that when he sat upon the bench he knew no distinction of persons. Imagine dragged before Brutus many of the noblest Roman senators, convicted of crime: he condemns them, and without mercy they are rent away by the lictors to their doom. You would admire certainly all this justice of Brutus. But suppose Brutus’ own son brought before him—and such was the case—imagine the father sitting on the judgment-bench and declaring that he knew no distinction whatever, even of his own children. Conceive that son tried and condemned out of his father’s own mouth. See him tied up before his father’s own eyes, while, as the inflexible judge, that father bids the lictor lay on the rod, and afterwards cries, “Take him away and use the axe!” See you not here how he loves his country better than his son, and he loves justice better than either. “Now,” says the world, “Brutus is just indeed.” Now, if God had condemned each of us one by one, or the whole race in a mass, there would certainly have been a vindication of his justice. But lo! his own son takes upon him the sins of the world, and he comes before his Father’s presence. He is not guilty in himself, but the sins of man are laid upon his shoulders. The Father condemns his Son; he gives him up to the Roman rod; he gives him up to Jewish mockery, to military scorn, and to priestly arrogance. He delivers up his Son to the executioner, and bids him nail him to the tree; and as if that were not enough, since the creature had not power of itself to give forth all the vengeance of God upon its own substitute, God himself smites his Son. Are you staggered at such an expression? It is scriptural.

Read in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and there you have the proof thereof:—"It pleased *the Lord* to bruise him: *he* hath put him to grief." When the whip had gone round to every hand, when the betrayer had smitten him, when Pilate and Herod, and Jew and Gentile, had each laid on the stroke, it was seen that human arm was not powerful enough to execute the full vengeance: then did the Father take his sword, and cry, "Awake! O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow," and he smote him sternly, as if he had been his enemy, as if he were a common culprit, as if he were the worst of criminals—he smote him again and again, till that awful shriek was forced from the lips of the dying substitute, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani,*"—my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Surely, when God smites his Son, and such a Son, when God smites his only begotten and well-beloved, then Justice has more than its due, more than itself could ask, Christ himself did freely give!

3. Furthermore, if you will please for a moment to consider how terrible were the agonies of Christ, which, mark you, he endured in the room, the place, the stead of all poor penitent sinners, of all those who confess their sins and believe in him; I say, when you mark these agonies, you will readily see why Justice does not stand in the sinner's way. Doth Justice come to thee this morning, and say, "Sinner, thou hast sinned, I will punish thee?" Answer thus—"Justice, thou hast punished all my sins. All I ought to have suffered has been suffered by my substitute, Jesus. It is true that in myself I owe thee a debt greater than I can pay, but it is true that in Christ I owe thee nothing; for all I did owe is paid, every farthing of it; the utmost drachm has been counted down; not a doit remains that is due from me to thee, O thou avenging justice of God." But if Justice still accuse, and conscience clamour, go thou and take Justice with thee to Gethsemane, and stand there with it:—see that man so oppressed with grief, that all his head, his hair, his garments bloody be. Sin was a press—a vice which forced his blood from every vein, and wrapped him in a sheet of his own blood. Dost see that man there! canst hear his groans, his cries, his earnest intercessions, his strong crying and tears! canst mark that clotted sweat as it crimson the frozen soil, strong enough to unloose the curse! dost see him in the desperate agony of his spirit, crushed, broken, bruised beneath the feet of the Justice in the olive press of God! Justice, is not that enough? will not that content thee? In a whole hell there is not so much dignity of vengeance as there is in the garden of Gethsemane. Art thou not yet satisfied? Come, Justice, to the hall of Pilate. Seest thou that man arraigned, accused, charged with sedition and with blasphemy! See him taken to the guard-room, spat upon, buffeted with hands, crowned with thorns, robed in mockery, and insulted with a reed for a sceptre. I say, Justice, seest thou that man, and dost thou know that he is "God over all blessed for ever?" and yet he endureth all this to satisfy thy demands! Art thou not content with that? Dost thou still frown? Let me show thee this man on the pavement. He is stripped. Stand, Justice, and listen to those stripes, those bloody scourges, and as they fall upon his devoted back and plough deep furrows there, dost thou see thong-full after thong-full of his quivering flesh torn from his poor bare back! Art not content yet, Justice? Then what will satisfy thee? "Nothing," says Justice, "but his death." Come thou with me, then thou canst see that feeble man hurried through the streets! Seest thou him driven to the top of Calvary, hurled on his back, nailed to the transverse wood? Oh, Justice, canst thou see his dislocated bones, now that his cross is lifted up? Stand with me, O Justice, see him as he weeps, and sighs, and cries; see his soul-agonies! Canst thou read that tale of terror which is veiled in that flesh and blood? Come, listen Justice, whilst thou hearest him cry, "I thirst," and whilst thou seest the burning fever devouring him, till he is dried up like a potsherd, and his tongue cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst! And lastly, O Justice, dost thou see him bow his

head, and die? “Yes,” saith Justice, “and I am satisfied; I have nothing that I can ask more; I am fully content; my uttermost demands are more than satisfied.”

And am I not content, too? Guilty though I am and vile, can I not plead that this bloody sacrifice is enough to satisfy God’s demands against me? Oh, yes, I trust I can,

“My faith doth lay its hand,
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin.”

Jesus, I believe that they sufferings were for me; and I believe that they are more than enough to satisfy for all my sins. By faith I cast myself at the foot of thy cross and cling to it. This is my only hope, my shelter, and my shield. It cannot be, that God can smite me now. Justice itself prevents, for when Justice once is satisfied it were injustice if it should ask for more. Now, is it not clear enough to the eye of every one, whose soul has been aroused, that Justice stands no longer in the way of the sinner’s pardon? God can be just, and yet the justifier. He has punished Christ, why should he punish twice for one offence? Christ has died for all his people’s sins, and if thou art in the covenant, thou art one of Christ’s people. Damned thou canst not be. Suffer for thy sins thou canst not. Until God can be unjust, and demand two payments for one debt, he cannot destroy the soul for whom Jesus died. “Away goes universal redemption,” says one. Yes, away it goes, indeed. I am sure there is nothing about that in the Word of God. A redemption that does not redeem is not worth my preaching, or your hearing, Christ redeemed every soul that is saved; no more, and no less. Every spirit that shall be seen in heaven Christ bought. If he had redeemed those in hell, they never could have come there. He has bought his people with his blood, and they alone shall he bring with him. “But who are they?” says one. Thou art one, if thou believest. Thou art one if thou repentest of thy sin. If thou wilt now take Christ to be thy all in all, then thou art one of his; for the covenant must prove a lie, and God must be unjust, and justice must become unrighteousness, and love must become cruelty, and the cross must become a fiction, ere thou canst be condemned if thou trustest in Jesus.

This is the way in which Justice ceases to be the enemy of souls.

II. The second text says that not only can God be just, but it says something more: it says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Now, if I understand this text, it means this: that **IT IS AN ACT OF JUSTICE ON GOD’S PART TO FORGIVE THE SINNER WHO MAKES A CONFESSION OF HIS SIN TO GOD**. Mark! not that the sinner deserves forgiveness: that can never be. Sin can never merit anything but punishment, and repentance is no atonement for sin. Not that God is bound from any necessity of his nature to forgive every one that repents, because repentance has not in itself sufficient efficacy and power to merit forgiveness at the hand of God. Yet, nevertheless, it is a truth that, because God is just, he must forgive every sinner who confesses his sin. And if he did not—and mark, it is a bold thing to say, but it is warranted by the text—if a sinner should be led truly and solemnly to make confession of his sins and cast himself on Christ, if God did not forgive him, then he were not the God that he is represented to be in the Word of God: he were a God unjust, and that may God forbid, such a thing must not, cannot be. But how, then, is it that Justice itself actually demands that every soul that repents should be pardoned? It is so. The same Justice that just now stood with a fiery sword in his hand, like the cherubim of old keeping the way of the tree of life, now goes hand in hand with the sinner. “Sinner,” he says, “I will go with thee. When thou

goest to plead for pardon I will go and plead for thee. Once I spoke against thee: but now I am so satisfied with what Christ has done, that I will go with thee and plead for thee. I will change my language I will not say a word to oppose thy pardon, but I will go with thee and demand it. It is but an act of justice that God should now forgive." And the sinner goes up with Justice, and what has Justice got to say? Why, it says this: "God must forgive the repenting sinner, if he be just, according to his promise." A God who could break his promise were unjust. We do not believe in men who tell us lies. I have known some of so gentle a disposition, that they could never say "No;" if they were asked to do a thing they have said, "Yes." But they have never earned a character for it, when they have said "Yes," and afterwards did not fulfil. It is not so with God. He is no tender-hearted being who promises more than he can perform, and no forgetful one who promises what afterwards shall slip from his memory. Every word which God utters shall be fulfilled, whether it be decree, threatening, or promise. Sinner! go to God with a promise in your hand.—"Lord thou hast said, 'He that confesseth his sin, and forsaketh it, shall find mercy.' I confess my sin, and I forsake it: Lord, give me mercy!" Don't doubt but that God will give it you. You have his own pledge in your hand; you have his own bond in your keeping. Take that pledge and that bond before his throne of mercy, and that bond never shall be cancelled till it has been honoured. You shall see that promise fulfilled to the uttermost letter, though your sin be never so black. Suppose the promise you take should be this. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "But," says the Law, "thou art one of the greatest sinners that ever lived." "Ay, but the promise says, 'Him that cometh,' and I come, and I claim the fulfillment of it." "No, but thou hast been a blasphemer." "I know it, but the promise says, 'Him that cometh,' and I come, and blasphemer though I am, I claim the promise." "But thou hast been a thief, thou hast deceived thy neighbour, and thou hast robbed men." "I have, but the promise says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;' I come, and I claim the promise. It does not say anything at all about character in the promise: it says, 'Him that cometh,' and I come, and if I be black as the devil, nevertheless God is true, and I claim the promise. I confess all that can be said against me. Will God be untrue, and send a seeking soul away with a promise unfulfilled? Never!" "But," says one, "you have lived many years in this way; your conscience has often checked you, and you have resisted conscience often: it is too late now." "But I have the promise, 'Him that cometh,'—there is no time stipulated in it—'Him that cometh;' I come, and O God, thou canst not break the promise!" Challenge God by faith, and you will see that he will be as good as his word to you. Though you are worse than words can tell, God, I repeat it, as long as he is just, must honour his own promise. Go and confess your sin, trust in Christ, and you shall find pardon.

But, again, not only did God make the promise, but according to the text man has been induced to act upon it; and, therefore, this becomes a double bond upon the justice of God. Suppose you made a promise to any man, that if such a thing was done, you would do something else, and suppose that man were to do something quite contrary to his own nature, quite abhorrent to himself; but he did it nevertheless, because he expected to get great blessings thereby, do you mean to say you would tempt a man to do that, and put him to vast expense, and care and trouble, and then turn round and say? "There I shall have nothing to do with that promise: I only promised to make you do so-and-so, now, I will not fulfil my engagement." Why the man would turn about and call you base to make a promise to lead him to do something and then not fulfil your promise. Now, God has said, "If we confess our sins and trust in Christ, we shall have mercy." You have done it; you have made the most abject and sincere confession, and you do declare that you have no trust but

the blood and righteousness of Christ. Now, on the faith of the promise you have been led into this state. Do you imagine when God has brought you through much pain and agony of mind to repent of sin, to give up self-righteousness, and rely on Christ, he will afterwards turn round and tell you he did not mean what he said? It cannot be—it cannot be. Suppose, now you were about to engage a man to be your servant, and you say to him, renounce such a situation, give that up; come and take a house in the neighbourhood where I live, and I will take you to be my servant.” Suppose he does it, and you then say, “I am glad for your own sake that you have left your master, still I will not take you.” What would he say to you? He would say, “I gave up my situation on the faith of your promise, and now, you break it.” Ah! but it never can be said of Almighty God, that, if a sinner acted on the faith of his promise, then that promise was not kept. God ceases to be God when he ceases to have mercy upon the soul who seeks pardon through the blood of Christ. No, he is a just God, “Faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

One more aspect of this case. God’s justice demands that the sinner should be forgiven if he seeks mercy, for this reason: Christ died on purpose to secure pardon for every seeking soul. Now, I hold it to be an axiom, a self-evident truth, that whatever Christ died for he will have. I cannot believe that when he paid to his Father the price of blood, and groans and tears, he bought something which the Father will not give him. Now, Christ died to purchase the pardon of sin for all those who believe on him, and do you suppose that the Father will rob him of that which he has bought so dearly? No, God were untrue to his own Son, he would break his oath to his well-beloved and only begotten Son, if he were not to give pardon, peace, and purity to every soul that comes to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, I would that I could preach it as with a tongue of thunder everywhere, God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. God is just to forgive us our sins, if we confess them; just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

III. Now, to close. I must just enter into some little EXPLANATION OF THE TWO GREAT DUTIES THAT ARE TAUGHT IN THE TWO TEXTS. The first duty is *faith*—“believeth in Christ;” the second text is *confession*—“if we confess our sins.”

I will begin with *confession* first. Expect not that God will forgive you until you confess; not in the general confession of a prayer book, but in the particular confession of your own inmost heart. You are not to confess to a priest or a man, unless you have offended against him. In that respect, if you have been an offender against any man, be at peace with him and ask his pardon for aught you have done against him. It is a proof of a noble mind when you can ask pardon of another for having done amiss. Whenever grace comes into the heart it will lead you to make amends for any injury which you have done either by word or deed to any of your fellow-men; and you cannot expect that you shall be forgiven of God until you have forgiven men, and have been ready to make peace with those who are now your enemies. That is a beautiful trait in the character of a true Christian. I have heard of Mr. John Wesley, that he was attended in most of his journeyings by one who loved him very much, and was willing, I believe, to have died for him. Still he was a man of a very stubborn and obstinate disposition, and Mr. Wesley was not perhaps the very kindest man at all times. Upon one occasion he said to this man, “Joseph, take these letters to the post.” “I will take them after preaching, sir.” “Take them now, Joseph,” said Mr. Wesley. “I wish to hear you preach, sir; and there will be sufficient time for the post after service.” “I insist upon your going now, Joseph.” “I will not go at present” “You won’t!” “No, sir.” “Then you and I must part,” said Mr. Wesley. “Very good, sir.” The good men slept over it. Both were early risers. At four o’clock the next morning, the refractory helper was accosted with, “Joseph, have you considered what I

said—that we must part?” “Yes, sir.” “And must we part?” “please yourself, sir.” “Will you ask my pardon, Joseph?” “No, sir.” “You won’t?” “No, sir.” “Then I will ask *yours*, Joseph!” Poor Joseph was instantly melted, and they were at once reconciled. When once the grace of God has entered the heart, a man ought to be ready to seek forgiveness for an injury done to another. There is nothing wrong in a man confessing an offense against a fellow-man, and asking pardon for the wrong he has done him. If you have done aught, then, against any man, leave thy gift before the altar, and go and make peace with him, and then come and make peace with God. You are to make confession of your sin to God. Let that be humble and sincere. You cannot mention every offense, but do not hide one. If you hide one it will be a millstone round your neck to sink you into the lowest hell. Confess that you are vile in your nature, evil in your practice, that in you there is no good thing. Lie as low as ever you can at the footstool of divine grace, and confess that you are a wretch undone unless God have mercy upon you.

Then, the next duty is *faith*. Whilst thou art lying there in the dust turn thine eye to Christ and say. “Black as I am, and hell-deserving as I confess myself to be, I believe that Jesus Christ died for the penitent; and inasmuch as he died, he died that the penitent might not die. I believe thy merits to be great; I believe thy blood to be efficacious; and more than that, I risk my eternal salvation—and yet it is no risk—I venture my eternal salvation upon the merit of thy blood. Jesus, I cannot save myself. Cast the skirts of thy blood-red atonement over me. Come, take me in thine arms; come, wrap me in thy crimson vest, and tell me I am thine. I will trust in nothing else but thee. Nothing I can do or ever did shall be my dependence. I rely simply and entirely upon thy mighty cross, upon which thou didst die for sinners.”

My dear hearers, as to any probability of your being lost after such a confession and such a faith, I assure you there is neither possibility nor probability thereof. You are saved; you are saved in time, you are saved in eternity. Your sins are forgiven; your iniquities are all put away. In this life you shall be fed, and blessed and kept. Remaining sin within you shall be overcome and conquered; and you shall see his face at the last in glory everlasting, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him. “Whosoever believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life, and shall never come into condemnation.” “He that believeth on the Lord Jesus and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.”

And now in conclusion, I have tried to tell out simply and plainly the story of how God’s justice is satisfied, and has become the sinners friend, and I look for fruit, for where the gospel is simply preached it is never preached in vain. Only let us go home and pray now, that we may know the Saviour. Let us pray that others may know him too. If you are convinced of sin, my dear friends, do not lose a moment. Go to your chamber as soon as you get home, shut to your door, go alone to Jesus, and there repeat your confession, and once more affirm your faith in Christ; and you shall have that peace with God which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. Your troubled conscience shalt find rest: your feet shall be on a rock; and a new song shall be in your mouth, even praise for evermore.

“From whence this fear and unbelief?—

Hast thou, O Father, put to grief

Thy spotless Son for me?

And will the righteous Judge of men

Condemn me for that debt of sin,

Which, Lord, was charged on thee?

Complete atonement thou hast made,
And to the utmost farthing paid
Whate'er thy people owed;
How then can wrath on me take place
If shelter'd in thy righteousness,
And sprinkled with thy blood?
If thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely, in my room, endured
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand,—
First, at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.
Turn, then, my soul unto thy rest!
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty:
Trust in his efficacious blood;
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.”

The Believer's Challenge

A Sermon

(No. 256)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 5th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”—Romans 8:34.

THE PROTEST OF an innocent man against the charge of an accuser may well be strong and vehement. But here we have a more uncommon and a sublimer theme. It is the challenge of a justified sinner protesting with holy and inspired fervour that his character is clear and his conscience clean, even in the sight of heaven. Yet it is not the natural innocence of his heart, but the perfect mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which gives him this amazing confidence. May the Spirit of God enable me to expound to you this most blessed portion of God's Word.

We have before us in the text the four marvellous pillars upon which the Christian rests his hope. Any one of them were all-sufficient. Though the sins of the whole world should press on any one of these sacred columns, it would never break nor bend. Yet for our strong consolation, that we may never tremble or fear, God hath been pleased to give us these four eternal rocks, these four immovable foundations upon which our faith may rest and stand secure. But why is this? why needeth the Christian to have such firm, such massive foundations? For this simple reason: he is himself so doubtful, so ready to distrust, so difficult to be persuaded of his own security. Therefore hath God, as it were, enlarged his arguments. One blow might, we should have imagined, have been enough to have smitten to death our unbelief for ever; the cross ought to have been enough for the crucifixion of our infidelity, yet God, foreseeing the strength of our unbelief, hath been pleased to smite it four times that it might be razed to rise no more. Moreover, he well knew that our faith would be sternly attacked. The world, our own sin, and the devil, he foresaw would be continually molesting us; therefore hath he entrenched us within these four walls, he hath engarrisoned us in four strong lines of circumvallation. We cannot be destroyed. We have bulwarks, none of which can possibly be stormed, but when combined they are so irresistible, they could not be carried, though earth and hell should combine to storm them. It is, I say, first, because of our unbelief; and secondly, because of the tremendous attacks our faith has to endure, that God has been pleased to lay down four strong consolations, with which we may fortify our hearts whenever the sky is overcast, or the hurricane is coming forth from its place.

Let us now notice these four stupendous doctrines. I repeat it again, any one of them is all-sufficient. It reminds me of what I have sometimes heard of the ropes that are used in mining. It is said that every strand of them would bear the entire onnage, and consequently, if every strand bears the full weight that will ever be put upon the whole, there is an absolute certainty of safety given to the whole when twisted together. Now each of these four articles of our faith is sufficient to bear the weight of the sins of the whole world. What must be the strength when the whole four are interlaced and intertwined, and become the support of the believer? The apostle challenges the whole world, and heaven and hell too, in the question, “Who is he that condemneth?” and in order

to excuse his boldness, he gives us four reasons why he can never be condemned. “*Christ has died, yea, rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*” We shall first look over these four pillars of the believer’s faith, and then, afterwards, we shall ourselves take up the apostle’s challenge, and cry, “Who is he that condemneth?”

I. The first reason why the Christian never can be condemned is because CHRIST HATH DIED. We believe that in the death of Christ there was a full penalty paid to divine justice for all the sins which the believer can possibly commit. We teach every Sabbath day, that the whole shower of divine wrath was poured upon Christ’s head, that the black cloud of vengeance emptied out itself upon the cross, and that there is not left in the book of God a single sin against a believer, nor can there possibly be even a particle of punishment ever exacted at the hand of the man that believeth in Jesus, for this reason,—that Jesus has been punished to the full. In full tale hath every sin received sentence in his death. He hath suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. And now, if you and I are enabled this morning to go beneath the bloody tree of Calvary, and shelter ourselves there, how safe we are! Ah! we may look around and defy all our sins to destroy us. This shall be an all-sufficient argument to shut their clamorous mouths, “Christ hath died.” Here cometh one and he cries, “Thou hast been a blasphemer.” Yes, but Christ died a blasphemer’s death, and he died for blasphemers. “But thou hast stained thyself with lust.” Yes, but Christ died for the lascivious. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s own Son, cleanseth us from all sin; so away foul fiend, that also has received its due. “But thou hast long resisted grace, and long stood out against the warnings of God.” Yes, but “Jesus died;” and say what thou wilt, O conscience, remind me of what thou wilt; lo this shall be my sure reply—in “Jesus died.” Standing at the foot of the cross, and beholding the Redeemer in his expiring agony, the Christian may indeed gather courage. When I think of my sin, it seems impossible that any atonement should ever be adequate; but when I think of Christ’s death it seems impossible that any sin should ever be great enough to need such an atonement as that. There is in the death of Christ enough and more than enough. There is not only a sea in which to drown our sins, but the very tops of the mountains of our guilt are covered. Forty cubits upwards hath this red sea prevailed. There is not only enough to put our sins to death, but enough to bury them and hide them out of sight. I say it boldly and without a figure,—the eternal arm of God now nerved with strength, now released from the bondage in which justice held it, is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Christ.

This was my subject last Sabbath day, therefore I take it I shall be fully justified in leaving the first point—that *Christ hath died*, while I pass on to the other three. You will bear in mind that I discussed the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ’s atonement by his death, in the sermon of last Sunday morning. I come, therefore, to notice the second argument. Our first reason for knowing that we cannot be condemned is, because Christ has died for us.

II. The second reason a believer hath, is—that CHRIST HAS RISEN AGAIN.

You will observe that the apostle has here prefixed the words, “yea rather!” Do you see the force of this expression? As much as to say, it is a powerful argument for our salvation, that Christ died; but it is a still more cogent proof that every believer shall be saved, that Christ rose again from the dead. This does not often strike us. We generally receive more comfort at the cross than we do at the empty sepulchre. And yet this is just through our ignorance and through the blindness of our eyes; for verily to the enlightened believer there is more consolation in Jesus arising from the tomb, than there is in Jesus nailed to the cross. “Yea rather,” said the apostle; as if he would have it, that this is a still more powerful argument. Now what has the resurrection of Christ from

the dead to do with the justification of a believer? I take it thus: Christ by his death paid to his Father the full price of what we owed to him. God did as it were hold a bond against us which we could not pay. The alternative of this bond, if not paid, was, that we should be sold for ever under sin, and should endure the penalty of our transgressions in unquenchable fire. Now Jesus by his death paid all the debt; to the utmost farthing that was due from us to God Christ did pay by his death. Still the bond was not cancelled until the day when Christ rose from the dead; then did his Father, as it were, rend the bond in halves, and blot it out, so that thenceforward it ceases to have effect. It is true that death was the payment of the debt, but resurrection was the public acknowledgment that the debt was paid. "Now," says Paul, "yea rather, he is risen from the dead." O Christian, thou canst not be condemned, for Christ has paid the debt. Look at his gore, as it distils from his body in Gethsemane and on the accursed tree. But rather, lest there should be a shadow of a doubt, that thou canst not be condemned, thy debts are cancelled. Here is the full receipt; the resurrection hath rent the bond in twain. And now at Gods right hand there is not left a record of thy sin; for when our Lord Jesus Christ quitted the tomb, he left thy sin buried in it—once for all cast away—never to be recovered. To use another figure,—Christ's death was as it were the digging out of the gold of grace out of the deep mines of Jesus' sufferings. Christ coined, so to speak, the gold which should be the redemption of his children, but the resurrection was the minting of that gold; it stamped it with the Father's impress, as the current coin of the realm of heaven. The gold itself was fused in the atoning sacrifice, but the minting of it, making it into that which should be the current coin of the merchant, was the resurrection of Christ. Then did his Father stamp the atonement with his own image and his own superscription. On the cross I see Jesus dying for my sins as an expiating sacrifice; but in the resurrection I see God acknowledging the death of Christ, and accepting what he has done for my indisputable justification. I see him putting his own imprimatur thereupon, stamping it with his own signet, dignifying it with his own seal, and again I cry, "Yea rather, who is risen from the dead,"—who then can condemn the believer? To put Christ's resurrection yet in another aspect. His death was the digging of the well of salvation. Stern was the labour, toilsome was the work; he dug on, and on, and on, through rocks of suffering, into the deepest caverns of misery; but the resurrection was the springing up of the water. Christ digged the well to its very bottom, but not a drop did spring up; still was the world dry and thirsty, till on the morning of the resurrection a voice was heard, "Spring up O well," and forth came Christ himself from the grave, and with him came the resurrection and the life; pardon and peace for all souls sprang up from the deep well of his misery. Oh! when I can find enough for my faith to be satisfied with even in the digging of the well, what shall be my satisfaction when I see it overflowing its brim, and springing up with life everlasting? Surely the apostle was right when he said, "Yea rather, who hath risen from the dead." And yet another picture. Christ was in his death the hostage of the people of God. He was the representative of all the elect. When Christ was bound to the tree, I see my own sin bound there; when he died every believer virtually died in him; when he was buried we were buried in him, and when he was in the tomb, he was, as it were, God's hostage for all his church, for all that ever should believe on him. Now, as long as he was in prison, although there might be ground of hope, it was but as light sown for the righteous; but when the hostage came out, behold the first fruit of the harvest! When God said, "Let my Anointed go free, I am satisfied and content in him," then every elect vessel went free in him; then every child of God was released from durance vile no more to die, not to know bondage or fetter for ever. I do see ground for hope when Christ is bound, for he is bound for me; I do see reason for rejoicing when he dies,

for he dies for me, and in my room and stead; I do see a theme for solid satisfaction in his burial, for he is buried for me; but when he comes out of the grave, having swallowed up death in victory, my hope bursts into joyous song. He lives, and because he lives I shall live also. He is delivered and I am delivered too. Death hath no more dominion over him and no more dominion over me; his deliverance is mine, his freedom mine for ever. Again, I repeat it, the believer should take strong draughts of consolation here. Christ is risen from the dead, how can we be condemned? There are e'en stronger arguments for the non-condemnation of the believer in the resurrection of Christ than in his precious death and burial. I think I have shown this; only may God give us grace to rest upon this precious—"yea, rather, who is risen from the dead."

III. The next clause of the sentence reads thus: "WHO IS EVEN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." Is there not any word of special commendation to this? You will remember the last one had, "Yea, rather." Is there nothing to commend this? Well, if not in this text, there is in another. If, at your leisure, you read through the fifth chapter of this epistle to the Romans, you will there very readily discover that the apostle proves, that if Christ's death be an argument for our salvation, his life is a still greater one. He says in the tenth verse of that chapter, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more*"—that's the word I wanted—"much more we shall be saved by his life." We may look, then, at this third clause, as having a "much more" before it, comparing Scripture with Scripture. We cannot be condemned for "Christ hath died. Yea rather, is risen again; (*much more*) is even at the right hand of God." Here is an argument which hath much more power, much more strength, much more force than even Christ's death. Sometimes I have thought that impossible. Last Lord's day, I thought by God's good help I was enabled to persuade some of you that the death of Christ was an argument too potent to be ever denied—an argument for the salvation of all for whom he died. Much more, let me now tell you, is his life, much more the fact that he lives, and is at the right hand of the Father. Now I must call your attention to this clause, remarking that in other passages of God's Word, Christ is said to have sat down *for ever* at the right hand of God. Do observe with care the fact that he is always described in heaven as sitting down. This seems to me to be one material argument for the salvation of the believer—Christ *sits* in heaven. Now, he never would sit if the work were not fully done. Jesus when he was on earth, had a baptism to be baptised with, and how was he straitened until it was accomplished! He had not time so much as to eat bread, full often, so eager was he to accomplish all his work. And I do not, I cannot imagine that he would be sitting down in heaven in the posture of ease, unless he had accomplished all—unless "It is finished!" were to be understood in its broadest and most unlimited sense. There is one thing I have noticed, in looking over the old levitical law, under the description of the tabernacle. There were no seats whatever provided for the priests. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering sacrifice for sin. They never had any seats to sit on. There was a table for the shew-bread, an altar, and a brazen laver; yet there was no seat. No priest sat down; he must always stand; for there was always work to be accomplished, always something to be done. But the great high priest of our profession, Jesus, the Son of God, hath taken his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high. Why is this? Because, now the sacrifice is complete for ever, and the priest hath made a full end of his solemn service. What would the Jew have thought if it had been possible for a seat to have been introduced into the sanctuary, and for the high priest to sit down? Why, the Jew would then have been compelled to believe that it was all over, the dispensation was ended; for a sitting priest would be the end of all. And now we may rest assured, since we can see a sitting Christ in heaven, that the whole atonement is finished, the work is over,

he hath made an end of sin. I do consider that in this there is an argument why no believer ever can perish. If he could, if there were yet a chance of risk, Christ would not be sitting down; if the work were not so fully done, that every redeemed one should at last be received into heaven, he would never rest, nor hold his peace.

Turning, however, more strictly to the words of the text, “Who is even at the right hand of God”—what meaneth this? It means, first of all, that Christ is now in the honourable position of an accepted one. The right hand of God is the *place of majesty, and the place of favour too*. Now, Christ is his people’s representative. When he died for them they had rest; when he rose again for them, they had liberty; when he was received into his Father’s favour, yet again, and sat at his own right hand, then had they favour, and honour, and dignity. Do you not remember that the two sons of Zebedee asked to sit, one on the right hand and the other on the left? Little did they know that they had already what they asked for—for all the church is now at the right hand of the Father; all the church is now raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The raising and elevation of Christ to that throne of dignity and favour, is the elevation, the acceptance, the enshrinement, the glorifying of all his people, for he is their common head, and stands as their representative. This sitting at the right hand of God, then, is to be viewed as the acceptance of the person of the surety, the reception of the representative, and therefore, the acceptance of our souls. Who is he that condemneth, then? Condemn a man that is at the right hand of God! Absurd! Impossible! Yet am I there in Christ. Condemn a man who sits next to his Father, the King of kings! Yet there is the church, and how can she in the slightest degree incur condemnation, when she is already at the right hand of the Father with her covenant head. And let me further remark, that the right hand is *the place of power*. Christ at the right hand of God signifies that all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. Now, who is he that condemns the people that have such a head as this? O my soul! what can destroy thee if omnipotence is thy helper? If the aegis of the Almighty covers thee, what sword can smite thee? If the wings of the Eternal are thy shelter, what plague can attack thee? Rest thou secure. It Jesus is thine all-prevailing king, and hath trodden thine enemies beneath his feet, if sin, death, and hell, are now only parts of his empire, for he is Lord of all, and if thou art represented in him, and he is thy guarantee, thy sworn surety, it cannot be by any possibility that thou canst be condemned. While we have an Almighty Saviour, the redeemed must be saved; until omnipotence can fail, and the Almighty can be overcome, every blood-bought redeemed child of God is safe and secure for ever. Well did the apostle say of this—“*much more*—much more than dying and rising again from the dead, he lives at the right hand of God.”

IV. And now I come to the fourth; and this also hath an encomium passed upon it—“WHO ALSO MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US.” Our apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, puts a very strong encomium upon this sentence. What does he say upon it? A little more than he said about the others. The first one is, “*Yea rather;*” the second one is, “*Much more.*” And what is the third? Remember the passage—“He is able also to save them *unto the uttermost* that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Lo! this is—“*to the uttermost;*” what we thought, perhaps, to be the very smallest matter in the recital, is just the greatest. “*To the very uttermost*” he is able to save, seeing he ever lives to intercede—the strongest argument of the whole four. Let us try to meet this question, “Why does Christ intercede to day in heaven?” A quaint old divine says, that “When God in his justice rose from his throne to smite the surety, he would make no concession whatever. The surety paid the debt.” “Yet,” said the Judge, “I will not

come down to earth to receive the payment; bring it to me.” And therefore the surety first groped through death to fight his way up to the eternal throne, and then mounting aloft by a glorious ascension, dragged his conquered foes behind him, and scattering mercies with both his hands, like Roman conquerors who scattered gold and silver coins in their triumph, entered heaven. And he came before his Father’s throne and said, “There it is; the full price: I have brought it all.” God would not go down to the earth for payment; it must be brought to him. This was pictured by the high priest of old. The high priest first took the blood, but that was not accepted. He did not bring the mercy-seat outside the veil, to carry the mercy-seat to the blood. No; the blood must be taken to the mercy-seat, God will not stoop when he is just; it must be brought to him. So the high priest takes off his royal robes, and puts on the garments of the minor priest, and goes within the veil, and sprinkles the blood upon the mercy-seat. Even so did our Lord Jesus Christ. He took the payment and bore it to God,—took his wounds, his rent body, his flowing blood, up to his Father’s very eyes, and there he spread his wounded hands and pleaded for his people. Now here is a proof that the Christian cannot be condemned, because the blood is on the mercy-seat. It is not poured out on the ground; it is on the mercy-seat, it is on the throne; it speaks in the very ears of God, and it must of a surety prevail.

But, perhaps, the sweetest proof that the Christian cannot be condemned, is derived from the intercession of Christ, if we view it thus. Who is Christ, and who is it with whom he intercedes. My soul was in raptures when I mused yesterday upon two sweet thoughts; they are but simple and plain, but they were very interesting to me. I thought that had I to intercede for anybody, and do a mediating part, if I had to intercede for my brother with my father, I should feel I had got a safe case in hand. This is just what Jesus has to do. He has to intercede with his Father, and mark, with our Father too. There is a double precedent to strengthen our confidence that he must prevail. When Christ pleads, he does not plead with one who is stronger than him or inimical to him, but with his own Father. “My Father,” saith he “it is my delight to do thy will and it is thy delight to do my will, I *will* then that they, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” And then he adds this blessed argument, “Father those for whom I plead are thine own children, and thou lovest them as much as I do,” yea, “thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” Oh, it is no hard task to plead, when you are pleading with a Father for a brother, and when the advocate can say, “I go to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.” Suppose, my dear friends, that any of you were about to be tried for your life, do you think you could trust your advocacy with any man you know? I do really think I should be impatient to speak for myself. But my counsel would say, “Now just be quiet, my dear sir, you perhaps may plead more earnestly than I can, because it is for your own life, but then you do not understand the law, you will make some blunder or other, and commit yourself and spoil your own cause.” But still I think if my life were in hazard, and I stood in the dock, and my counsel were pleading for me, my tongue would be itching to plead for myself, and I should want to get up and just say, “My lord, I am innocent, innocent as the babe newly born, of the crime laid to my charge. My hands have never been stained with the blood of any man.” Oh! I think I could indeed plead if I were pleading for myself. But, do you know, I have never felt that with regard to Christ. I can sit down and let him plead, and I do not want to get up and conduct the pleading myself. I do feel that he loves me better than I love myself. My cause is quite safe in his hands, especially when I remember again that he pleads with *my* father, and that he is his own Father’s beloved Son, and that he is my brother—and such a brother—a brother born for adversity.

“Give him, my soul, thy cause to plead,

Nor doubt the Father's grace."

It is enough; he has the cause, nor would we take it from his hand even if we could—

"I know that safe with him remains,

Protected by his power—

What I've committed to his hands

Till the decisive hour."

Well did the apostle say, "To the very uttermost he is able to save them that come unto God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession for them."

I have thus given you the four props and pillars of the believer's faith. And now my hearers, let me just utter this personal appeal to you. What would you give, some of you, if you could have such a hope as this? Here are four pillars. Oh unhappy souls, that cannot call one of these your own! The mass of men are all in uncertainty; they do not know what will become of them at last. They are discontented enough with life and yet they are afraid to die. God is angry with them, and they know it. Death is terrible to them; the tomb affrights them, they can scarcely understand the possibility of having any confidence this side of the grave. Ah, my hearers, what would you give if you could obtain this confidence? And yet it is within reach of every truly penitent sinner. If you are now led to repent of sin; if you will now cast yourself on the blood and righteousness of Christ, your eternal salvation shall be as sure as your present existence. He cannot perish who relies on Christ, and he who hath faith in Jesus may see the heavens pass away, but not God's Word. He may see the earth burned, but into the fire of hell he can never go. He is safe, and he must be saved, though all things pass away.

And now this brings me to the challenge. Fain would I picture the apostle as he appeared when he was uttering it. Hark! I hear a brave, strong voice, crying, "Who shall lay anything to my charge?" "Who is that?—Paul. What! Paul, a Christian! I thought Christians were a humble, timid people." "They are so; but not when they are arrayed in the robes, and invested with the credentials of their Sovereign. They are lambs in the harmlessness of their dispositions, but they have the courage of lions when they defend the honours of their King. Again, I hear him cry, "Who shall lay anything to my charge?"—and he casts his eyes to heaven. Is not the wretch smitten dead? Will not such presumption as this be avenged? Does he challenge purity to convict him of guilt? O Paul, the thunderbolt of God will smite thee! "No," says he, "it is God that justifieth, I am not afraid to face the highest heaven, since God has said that I am just. I can look upward without distressing fear." "But hush! repeat not that challenge." "Yes," saith he, "I will. Who is he that condemneth." And I see him look downwards; there lies the old dragon, bound in chains, the accuser of the brethren; and the apostle stares him in the face, and says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Why, Paul, Satan will bring thundering accusations against thee; art thou not afraid? "No," says he, "I can stop his mouth with this cry, 'It is Christ that died;'—that will make him tremble, for he crushed the serpent's head in that victorious hour. And I can shut his mouth again—'yea rather, that is risen again,' for he took him captive on that day;—I will add, 'who sitteth at the right hand of God.' I can foil him with that, for he sits there to judge him and to condemn him for ever. Once more I will appeal to his advocacy 'Who maketh intercession for us.' I can stop his accusation with this perpetual care of Jesus for his people." Again, cries Paul, "Who shall lay anything to my charge?" There lie the bodies of the saints he has martyred, and they cry from under the altar—"O Lord! how long wilt thou not avenge thine own elect?" Paul says,—“Who can lay anything to my charge?” And they speak not; “because,” says Paul, “I have obtained mercy—who was before a

blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, that in me first he might show forth all longsuffering.” “Christ hath died, yea rather, hath risen again.” And now standing in the midst of men who mock, and boast, and jeer, he cries—“Who can lay anything to my charge?” and no one dares to speak, for man himself cannot accuse; with all his malevolence, and acrimony, and malice, he can bring nothing against him; no charge can stand at the bar of God against the man whom he hath absolved through the merits of the death of Christ, and the power of his resurrection.

Is it not a noble thing for a Christian to be able to go where he may, and feel that he cannot meet his accuser; that wherever he may be, whether he walketh within himself in the chambers of conscience, or out of himself amongst his fellow men, or above himself into heaven, or beneath himself into hell, yet is he a justified one, and nothing can be laid to his charge. Who can condemn? Who can condemn? Yea, echo O ye skies; reverberate, ye caverns of the deep. Who can condemn when Christ hath died, hath risen from the dead, is enthroned on high, and intercedes?

But all things pass away. I see the heavens on fire, rolling up like a scroll—I see sun, moon, and stars pale now their feeble light—the earth is tottering; the pillars of heaven are rocking; the grand assize is commenced—the herald angels descend, not to sing this time, but with thundering trumpets to proclaim, “He comes, he comes to judge the earth in righteousness, and the people in equity.” What says the believer now? He says, “I fear not that assize, for who can condemn?” The great white throne is set, the books are opened, men are trembling, fiends are yelling, sinners are shrieking—“Rocks hide us, mountains on us fall;” these make up an awful chorus of dismay. There stands the believer, and looking round on the assembled universe of men and angels, he cries, “Who shall lay anything to my charge?” and silence reigns through earth and heaven. Again he speaks, and fixing his eyes full on the Judge himself, he cries, “Who is he that condemneth?” And lo, there upon the throne of judgment sits the only one who can condemn; and who is that? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who sitteth on the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for him. Can those lips say, “Depart, ye cursed,” to the man for whom they once did intercede? Can those eyes flash lightnings on the man whom once they saw in sin, and thence with rays of love they did lift him up to joy, and peace, and purity? No! Christ will not belie himself. He cannot reverse his grace; it cannot be that the throne of condemnation shall be exalted on the ruins of the cross. It cannot be that Christ should transform himself at last; but till he can do so, none can condemn. None but he hath a right to condemn, for he is the sole judge of right and wrong, and if he hath died shall he put us to death, and if he hath risen for us, shall he thrust us downwards to the pit, and if he hath reigned for us and hath been accepted for us, shall he cast us away, and if he hath pleaded for us, shall he curse us at the last? No! Come life, come death, my soul can rest on this. He died for me. I cannot be punished for my sin. He rose again, I must rise, and though I die yet shall I live again. He sits at the right hand of God, and so must I. I must be crowned and reign with him for ever. He intercedes, and he must be heard. He beckons me, and I must be brought at length to see his face, and to be with him where he is.

I will say no more; only may God give us all an interest in these four precious things. An angel’s tongue might fail to sing their sweetness, or tell their brightness and their majesty; mine has failed—but this is well. The excellency of the power is in the doctrine, and not in my preaching. Amen.

The Scales of Judgment

A Sermon

(No. 257)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 12th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”—Daniel 5:27.

THERE IS A WEIGHING TIME for kings and emperors, and all the monarchs of earth, albeit some of them have exalted themselves to a position in which they appear to be irresponsible to man. Though they escape the scales on earth, they must surely be tried at the bar of God. For nations there is a weighing time. National sins demand national punishments. The whole history of God's dealings with mankind proves that though a nation may go on in wickedness it may multiply its oppressions; it may abound in bloodshed, tyranny, and war, but an hour of retribution draweth nigh. When it shall have filled up its measure of iniquity, then shall the angel of vengeance execute its doom. There cannot be an eternal damnation for nations as nations; the destruction of men at last will be that of individuals, and at the bar of God each man must be tried for himself. The punishment, therefore, of nations, is national. The guilt they incur must receive its awful recompense in this present time state. It was so with the great nation of the Chaldeans. They had been guilty of blood. The monuments which still remain, and which we have lately explored, prove them to have been a cruel and ferocious race. A people of a strange language they were, and stranger than their language were their deeds. God allowed that nation for a certain period to grow and thrive, till it became God's hammer, breaking in pieces many nations. It was the axe of the Almighty—his battle axe, and his weapon of war. By it he smote the loins of kings, yea, and slew mighty kings. But its time came at last. She sat alone as a queen, and said, “I shall see no sorrow,” nevertheless, the Lord brought her low, and made her grind in the dust of captivity, and gave her riches to the spoiler, and her pomp to the destroyer. Even so must it be with every nation of the earth that is guilty of oppression. Humbling itself before God, when his wrath is kindled but a little, it may for awhile arrest its fate; but if it still continue in its bold unrighteousness, it shall certainly reap the harvest of its own sowing. So likewise shall it be with the nations that now abide on the face of the earth. There is no God in heaven if the iniquity of slavery go unpunished. There is no God existing in heaven above if the cry of the negro do not bring down a red hail of blood upon the nation that still holds the black man in slavery. Nor is there a God anywhere if the nations of Europe that still oppress each other and are oppressed by tyrants do not find out to their dismay that he executes vengeance. The Lord God is the avenger of every one that is oppressed, and the executor of every one that oppreseth. I see, this very moment, glancing at the page of the world's present history, a marvellous proof that God will take vengeance. Piedmont, the land which is at this time sodden with blood, is only at this hour suffering the vengeance that has long been hanging over it. The snows of its mountains were once red with the blood of martyrs. It is not yet forgotten how there the children of God were hunted like partridges on the mountains; and so has God directed it, that the nations that performed that frightful act upon his children, shall there meet. rend, and devour

each other in the slaughter, and both sides shall be almost equal, and nothing shall be seen but that God will punish those who lift their hands against his anointed.

There has never been a deed of persecution—there has never been a drop of martyr's blood shed yet, but shall be avenged, and every land guilty of it shall yet drink the cup of the wine of the wrath of God. And especially certain is there gathering an awful storm over the head of the empire of Rome—that spiritual despotism of the firstborn of hell. All the clouds of God's vengeance are gathering into one—the firmament is big with thunder, God's right arm is lifted up even now, and ere long the nations of the earth shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire. They that have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication, shall soon also have to drink with her of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath; and they shall reel to and fro, their loins shall be loose, their knees shall smite together, when God fulfils the old handwriting on the rock of Patmos.

Our duty at this time is to take heed to ourselves as a nation that we purge ourselves of our great sins. Although God has given so much light, and kindly favored us with the dew of his Spirit, yet England is a hoary sinner. Favourably with mercy does God regard her, so much the rather then let each Christian try to shake off the sins of his nation from his own skirt, and let each one to the utmost of his ability labor and strive to purify this land of blood and oppression, and of everything evil that still clingeth to her. So may God preserve this land; and may its monarchy endure till he shall come, before whom both kings and princes shall lose their power right cheerfully even as the stars fade when the king of light—the sun—lifteth up his golden head.

With this brief preface, I will leave nations and kings all to themselves, and consider the text principally as it has relation to each one of us; and may God grant that when we go out of this hall most of us may be able to say, "I thank God I have a good hope that when weighed in the scales at last I shall not be found wanting." Or, if that is too much to expect, may I yet trust some will go away convinced of sin, crying in their own spirits, "I am wanting now, but if God in his mercy meet with me, I shall not be wanting long."

I shall notice, first, that *there are certain preliminary weighings which God would have us put ourselves to in this world, and which indeed he has set up as kind, of tests whereby we may be able to discover what shall be the result of the last decisive weighing.* After I have mentioned these, I shall then come to speak of the *last tremendous weighing of the judgment day.*

I. LET US JUDGE OURSELVES THAT WE THAT WE MAY NOT BE JUDGED. It is for us now to put ourselves through the various tests by which we may be able to discover, whether we are, at this present time, short weight or not.

The first test I would suggest is that of *human opinion.* Now understand me. I do believe that the opinion of man is utterly valueless when that opinion is based upon false premises, and, therefore, draws wrong conclusions. I would not trust the world to judge God's servants, and it is a mercy to know that the world shall not have the judging of the church, but rather, the saints shall judge the world. There is a sense in which I would say with the apostle, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea. I judge not myself." Human opinion is not to be put in competition with divine revelation. But I speak now of judging ourselves, and I do not think it safe, when weighing our own character, to prefer our own and exclude our neighbour's judgment. The esteem or contempt of honest men, which is instinctively shown without reference to party or prejudice, is not by any means to be despised. When a man knows that he is right he may snap his fingers in the face of all men but when a man's conscience tells him that he is wrong—if at the judgment bar of men he is found guilty, he must not despise it, he must rather look on the

judgment of men as being the first intimation of what shall be the judgment of God. Are you, my hearer, at this time in the estimation of all your fellow-creatures condemned as one who should be avoided? Do you clearly perceive that the righteous shun you, because your example would contaminate them? Have you discovered that your character is not held to be estimable amongst honest and respectable men? Let me assure you, that you have good reason to be afraid for if you cannot stand the trial of an honest fellow-creature—if the law of your country condemn you—if the very laws of society exclude you—if the imperfect judgments of earth pronounce you too vile for its association, how fearful must be your condemnation when you are put into the far more rigid scale of God's justice, and terrible must be your fate when the perfect community of the first-born in heaven shall rise as one man, and demand that you shall never behold their society? When a man is so bad that his fellow-creatures themselves, imperfect though they be, are able to see in him, not the mere seeds, but the very flower, the full bloom of iniquity, he should tremble. If you cannot pass that test, if human opinion condemn—if your own conscience declare that opinion to be just, you have good need to tremble indeed, for you are put into the balances and are found wanting.

I have thought it right to mention this balance. There may be some present to whom it may be pertinent, but at the same time, there are far better tests for men, tests which are not so easily to be misunderstood. And I would go through some of these. One of the scales into which I would have every man put himself, at least once in his life—I say at least once, because, if not, heaven is to him a place, the gates of which are shut for ever—I would have every man put himself into the scales of the *divine law*. There stands the law of God. This law is a balance which will turn, even were there but a grain of sand in it. It is true to a hair. It moves upon the diamond of God's eternal immutable truth. I put but one weight into the scale; it is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," and I invite any man who thinks himself to be of the right stamp, and flatters himself that he has no need of mercy no need of washing in the blood of Jesus Christ, no need of any atonement—I invite him to put himself into the scales, and see whether he be full weight, when there be but so much as this one commandment in the other scale. Oh, my friends, if we did but try ourselves by the very first commandment of the law, we must acknowledge that we are guilty. But when we drop in weight after weight, till the whole sacred ten are there, there is not a man under the cope of heaven who has one grain of wit left, but must confess that he is short of the mark,—that he falls below the standard which the law of God requires. Mrs. Too-good has often declared that she herself has done all her duty, and perhaps a little more; that she has been even more kind to the poor than there was any occasion for; that she has gone to church more frequently than even her religion requireth; that she has been more attentive to the sacraments than the best of her neighbors, and if *she* does not enter heaven she does not know who will. "If I have not a portion amongst the saints, who can possibly hope to see God's face in light?" Nay, madam, but I am sorry for thee; thou art light as a feather when thou goest into the scales. In these wooden balances of thine own ceremonies thou mayest, perhaps, be found right enough, but in those eternal scales, with those tremendous weights—the ten commandments of the law—the declaration is suspended over thy poor foolish head. "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."

There may, perhaps, in congregations like this, be some extremely respectable body who has from his youth up, as he imagines, kept God's law; his country, family, or associates can bring no charge against him, and so he wraps himself up and considers that really he is the man, and that when he appears at the gate of heaven, he will be received as a rightful owner and proprietor of the

reward of the righteous. Ah, my friend if thou wouldst take the trouble just to sit down and weigh thyself in the scales of the law—if thou wouldst take but one command, the one in which thou thinkest thyself least guilty, the one that thou imagines thou hast kept best, and really look at its intent, and spirit, and view it in all its length and breadth in truth I know thou wouldst keep out of the scale and say, “Alas, when I hoped to have gone down with a sound of congratulation, I find myself hurled up, light as the dust of the balance, while the tremendous law of God comes sounding down and shakes the house.” Let each man do this, and every one of us must retire from this place saying, “I am weighed in the balances and I am found wanting.”

And now the true believer comes forward and he claimed to be weighed in another balance, for saith he, according to this balance, if I be what I profess to be, I am not found wanting, for I can bring with me the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and that is full weight, even though the ten commandments of the law be weighed against it. I bring with me the full atonement, the perfect satisfaction of Jesus, blood, and the perfect righteousness of a divine being, the spotless righteousness of Jesus the Son of God. I can be weighed against the law, and yet sit securely, knowing that now and for ever, I am equal to the law. It hath nought against me since Christ is mine, Its terrors have no power to affright me, and as for its demands they can exact nothing of me for they are fulfilled to the utmost in Christ. Well, I propose now to take professors and put them into the scales and try them. Let each one of us put ourselves into the scale of *conscience*. Many make a profession of religion in this age. It is the time of shams There were never so many liars in the world since the days of Adam, as there are now. The Father of Lies has been more prolific of children at this than at any other period. There is such an abundance of newspapers, and of talkers, and of readers: and consequently flying reports, wrong news, and evil tales, are far more numerous than ever. So, too, there is a great deal of vain shew with religion. I sometimes fear we have not a grain more religion in England now than we had in the time of the Puritans. Then, though the stream in which it ran was narrow, it did run very deep indeed; now, the banks have been burst; a great extent of country is covered with religious profession; but I tremble lest we should find at last, that the flood was not deep enough to float our souls to heaven. Will each one now in this congregation, put himself into the scale of conscience, sit down and ask, “Is my profession true? Do I feel that before God I am an heir of the promises? When I sit at my Saviour’s table, have I any right to be a guest? Can I truly say, that when I profess to be converted, I only profess what I have actually proved? When I talk experimentally about the things of the kingdom of God, is that experience a borrowed tale, or have I felt what I say in my own breast? When I stand up to preach, do I preach that which I have really tasted and handled, or do I only repeat that which I have learned to utter with the lip, though it has never been fused in the crucible of my own heart?” Conscience is not very readily cheated. There are some men whose consciences are not a safe balance; they have by degrees become so hardened in sin that conscience refuses to work; but still I will hope that most of us may abide by the test of our own conscience, if we let it freely work. Dear friends, I would that you would often retire to your chambers alone; shut the door and shut out all the world, and then sit and review your past life; scan carefully your present character and your present position; and do, I beseech you try to get an honest answer from your own conscience. Bring up everything that you can think of that might lead you to doubt. You need be under no difficulty here; for are there not enough sins committed by us every day, to warrant our suspicions that we are not God’s children? Well, let all these black accusers for death, let them all have their say. Do not cloak your sins. Head your diary through, let all your iniquities come up before you; (this is the pith of confession) and then, ask

conscience whether you can truly say, "I have repented of all these. God is my witness, I hate these things with a perfect hatred. God also heareth me witness, that my trust is fixed alone in him who is the Saviour of sinners, for salvation and justification. If I be not awfully deceived, I am a partaker of divine grace, having been regenerated and begotten again unto a lively hope." Oh that conscience may help each of us to say, "I am not a mere painted image of life, but I trust I have the life of Jesus made manifest in my body." My profession is not the pompous pageantry with which dead souls are carried respectably to perdition; but it is the joy, the hope, the confidence of one who is being borne along in the chariot of mercy, to his Father's home above. "Ah! how many people are really afraid to look their religion in the face! They know it to be so bad, they dare not examine it. They are like bankrupts that keep no books. They would be very glad for a fire to consume their books, if they ever kept any, for they know the balance is all on the wrong side. They are losing, breaking up, and they would not wish to keep an account of their losses or villainies. A man who is afraid to examine himself, may rest assured that his ship is rotten, and that it will not be long before it founders in the sea, to his eternal shipwreck. Call up conscience; put yourself in the scale, and God help you, that the verdict may not be against you—that it may not be said of you, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."

I would have every man also weigh himself in the scales of *God's Word*—not merely in that part of it which we call legal, and which has respect to us in our fallen state; but let us weigh ourselves in the scale of the gospel. You will find it sometimes a holy exercise, to read some psalm of David, when his soul was most full of grace; and if you were to put questions as you read each verse, saying to yourself, "Can I say this? Have I felt as David felt? Have my bones ever been broken with sin as his were when he penned his penitential psalms? Has my soul ever been full of true confidence, in the hour of difficulty, as his was when he sang of God's mercies in the cave of Adullam, or the holds of Engedi? Can I take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord? Can I pay my vows now unto the Lord, in the courts of his house, in the presence of all his people?" I am afraid that the book of Psalms itself would be enough to convince some of you that your religion is but superficial, that it is but a vain show, and not a vital reality. God help you often to try yourselves in that scale. Then read over the life of Christ, and as you read, ask yourselves whether you are conformed to him, such as he describes a true disciple. Endeavour to see whether you have any of the meekness, any of the humility, any of the lovely spirit which he constantly inculcated and displayed. Try yourselves by the sermon on the mount, you will find it a good scale in which to weigh your spirits. Take then the epistles, and see whether you can go with the apostle in what he said of his experience. Have you ever cried out like him:—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? "Have you ever felt like him, that this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" Have you ever known his self-abasement? Could you say that you seemed to yourself the chief of sinners, and always accounted yourself less than the least of all saints? And have you known anything of his devotion? Could you join with him and say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain?" Oh, brethren! the best of us—if we put the Bible into the scales for the proof of our state, if we read God's Word as a test of our spiritual condition—the very best of us has cause to tremble. Before Almighty God, on our bended knees, with our Bible before us, we have good reason to stop many a time and say, "Lord, I feel I have never yet been here, oh, bring me here! give me true penitence, such as this I read of Give me real faith. oh, let me not have a counterfeit religion! give me that which is the current coin of the realm of heaven—thine own sterling grace, which shall pass in the

great day, when the gates of heaven shall be opened, and alas! the gates of hell wide open too." Try yourselves by God's Word, and I fear there are some who will love to rise from it, and say, "I am weighed in the balances and found wanting."

Yet again, God has been pleased to set another means of trial before us. When God puts us into the scales I am about to mention, namely, the scales of *providence*, it behoves us very carefully to watch ourselves and see whether or not, we be found wanting. Some men are tried in the scales of adversity. Some of you, my dear friends, may have come here very sorrowful. Your business fails, your earthly prospects are growing dark; it is midnight with you in this world; you have sickness in the house; the wife of your bosom languishes before your weeping eyes; your children perhaps, by their ingratitude, have wounded your spirits. But you are a professor of religion, you know what God is doing with you now; he is testing and trying you. He knows you, and he would have you know that a summer-time religion is not sufficient; he would have you see whether your faith can stand the test of trial and trouble. Remember Job; what a scale was that in which he was put! What weights of affliction were those east in one after another, very mountains of sore trouble; and yet he could bear them all, and he came out of the scales proof against all the weight that even Satanic strength could hurl into the scale. And is it so with you? Can you now say—"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord?" Can you submit to his will without murmuring? Or if you cannot master such a phase of religion as this, are you able still to feel that you cannot complain against God? Do you still say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him?" Oh, my friends, remember that if your religion will not stand the day of adversity, if it afford you no comfort in the time of storms, you would be better in that ease without it than with it; for with it you are deceived, but without it you might discover your true condition, and seek the Lord as a penitent sinner. If thou art now broken in pieces by a little adversity, what will become of thee in the day when all the tempests of God shall be let loose on your soul? If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? If thou canst not endure the open grave, how canst thou endure the trump of the archangel, and the terrific thunders of the last great day? If thy burning house is too much for thee, what wilt thou do in a burning world? If thunder and lightning alarm thee, what wilt thou do when the world is in a blaze, and when all the thunders of God leave their hiding-place, and rush pealing through the world? If mere trial distress thee and grieve thee, oh, what wilt thou do when all the hurricanes of divine vengeance shall sweep across the earth and shake its very pillars, till they reel and reel again? Yes, friends, I would have you, as often as you are tried and troubled, see how you bear it—whether your faith then stance and whether you could see God's right hand, even when it is wrapped in clouds, whether you can discover the silver lining to the black clouds of tribulation. God help you to come out of the scales, for many are weighed in them and have been found wanting.

Another set of scales there is, too, of an opposite color. Those I have described are painted black; these are of golden hue. They are the scales of *prosperity*. Many a man has endured the chills of poverty who could not endure sunny weather. Some meets religion is very much like the palace of the queen of Russia, which had been built out of solid slabs of ice. It could stand the frost. the roughest breeze could not destroy it; the sharp touch of winter could not devour it; they but strengthened and made it more lasting. But summer melted it all away, and where once were the halls of revelry, nothing remained but the black rolling river. How many have been destroyed by prosperity? The fumes of popularity have turned the brains of many a man. The adulation of multitudes has laid thousands low. Popular applause hath its foot in the sand, even when it hath its

head among the stars. Many have I known who in a cottage seemed to fear God but in a mansion have forgotten him. When their daily bread was earned with the sweat of their brow, then it was they served the Lord, and went; up to his house with gladness. But their seeming religion all departed when their flocks and herds increased, and their gold and silver was multiplied. It is no easy thing to stand the trial of prosperity. You know the old fable, I will just put it in a Christian light. When the winds of affliction blow on a Christian's head, he just pulls around him the cloak of heavenly consolation, and girds his religion about him all the tighter for the fury of the storm. But when the sun of prosperity shines on him, the traveler grows warm, and full of delight and pleasure, he ungirds his cloak, and lays it aside; so that what the storms of affliction never could accomplish, the soft hand and the witchery of prosperity has been able to perform. It has loosed the loins of many a mighty man. It has been the Delilah that has shorn the locks and taken away the strength of many a Samson. This rock has witnessed the most fatal wrecks.

“More the treacherous calm I dread,
Than tempests rolling over head.”

But shall we be able to say after passing through prosperity, “this is not my rest, this is not my God. Let him give me what he may, I will thank him for it, yet will I rejoice in the giver rather than the gift; I will say unto the Lord thou only art my rest.” It is well if you can come out of these scales enabled honestly to hope that you are not found wanting.

There are again the scales of *temptation*. Many and many a man seemeth for a time to run well; but it is temptation that tries the Christian. In your business you are now honest and upright, but suppose a speculation cross your path, which involve but a very slight departure from the high standard of Christianity, and indeed would not involve any departure from the low standard which your fellow tradesmen follow. Do you think you would be able to say “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.” Could you say, “Should such a man as I do this? Shall I haste to be rich, for if I do I shall not be innocent?” How has it been with you? You have had your trial-time. There has been an opportunity of making a little: have you taken it? Has God enabled you to endure when tempted, whether to unlawful gain, or to lustful pleasure, or to pride and vanity? Have you been enabled to stand proof against all these, and to say, “Get thee behind me Satan for thou savourest not the things which be of God, but those which be of man and of sin?” How have you stood the test of temptation? If you have never been tempted you know nothing about this. How can we tell the worthiness of the ship till she has been at sea in the storm? You cannot know what you are till you have been through the practical test of every day life. How then has it been with you? Have you been weighed in the balance, and have you been enabled to say, “I know through grace I have been kept in the hour of temptation, and with the temptation the Lord has always sent a way of escape. And here I am glorying in his grace; I cannot rest in myself, but still I can say, ‘I am truly his.’ The work within me is not of man, neither by man: it is the work of the Spirit. I have found succor and support when my heart and my flesh have failed me.”

It is probable, my hearers, that most of you are professors of religion; let me ask you again very earnestly to test and try yourselves, whether your religion be real or not. If there be many false prophets in the world, and those prophets have followers, must there not be many false men who are fatally deceived? Do not suppose, I beseech you, because you are a deacon, or have been baptized, or are a member of the church, or are professors, you are therefore safe. The bleaching bones of the skeletons of self-deceived ones should warn you. On the rock of presumption thousands have been split that once sailed merrily enough. Take care, O mariner! though thy bark may be

gaily trimmed and may be brightly painted, yet it is none the surer after all. Take heed, lest the rocks be seen beneath the keel, lest they pierce thee through, and lest the waters of destruction overwhelm thee. Oh! do not, I entreat you, say, "Why make this stir? I dare say I shall be all right at last." Do not let your eternal state be a matter of suspicion or doubt. Decide now, I beseech you, decide now in your conscience whether you are Christ's or not. Of all the most miserable men in the world, and the most hopeless, I think those are most to be pitied who are indifferent and careless about religion. There are some men whose feelings never run deeper than their skin; they either have no heart, or else it is so set round with fatness that you can never touch them. I like to see a man either desponding or rejoicing; either anxious about his eternal state or else confident about it. But you who never will question yourselves—you are just like the bullock going to the slaughter, or like the sheep that will enter the very slaughter-house and lick the knife that is about to take its blood. I wish I could speak this morning somewhat more earnestly. Oh that some sparks from the Divine fire could now light up my soul, I think I could speak to you like some of the prophets of old, when they stood in the midst of a professing generation, to warn them. Oh that the very voice of God would speak to each heart this morning! While God is thundering on high may he thunder below in your souls! Be warned, my hearers, against self deception. Be true to yourselves. If God be God, serve him, and do it truly; if the devil be God, serve him, and serve him honestly, and serve him faithfully. But do not pretend to be serving God, while you are really indifferent and careless about it.

II. I must now close by endeavoring to speak of THE LAST GREAT BALANCE; and here would I speak very solemnly, and may the Spirit of God be with us. Time shall soon be over; eternity must soon begin, death is hurrying onward; the pale horse at his utmost speed is coming to every inhabitant of this earth. The arrow of death is fitted to the string, and soon shall it be sent home. Man's heart is the target. Then, after death, cometh the judgment; the dread assize shall soon commence. The trump of the archangel shall awake the sleeping myriads, and, standing on their feet, they shall confront the God against whom they have sinned. Methinks I see the scales hanging in heaven, so massive that none but the hand of Deity can uphold them. Let me cast my eye upward, and bethink me of that hour when I must myself enter those scales and be weighed once for all. Come, let me speak for each man present. Those scales yonder are exact; I may deceive my fellows here, but deceive God I cannot then. I may be weighed in the balances of earth, which shall give but a partial verdict, and so commit myself to a false idea that I am what I am not, that I am hopeful when I am hopeless. But *those* scales are true. There is no means whatever of flattering them into a false declaration; they will cry aloud and spare not. When I get there, the voice of flattery shall be changed into the voice of honesty. Here I may go daily on crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace;" but there the naked truth shall startle me, and not a single word of consolation shall be given me that is not true. Let me therefore ponder the fact, that those scales are exactly true and cannot be deceived. Let me remember also, that whether I will or not, into those scales I must go. God will not take me on my profession. I may bring my witnesses with me; I may bring my minister and the deacons of the church to give me a character, which might be thought all-sufficient among men, but God will tolerate no subterfuge. Into the scales he will put me do what I may; whatever the opinion of others may be of me, and whatever my own profession. And let me remember, too, that I must be altogether weighed in the scales. I cannot hope that God will weigh my head and past over my heart—that because I have correct notions of doctrine, therefore he will forget that my heart is impure, or my hands guilty of iniquity. My all must be cast into the scales. Come, let

me stretch my imagination, and picture myself about to be put into those scales. Shall I be able to walk boldly up and enter them, knowing whom I have believed, and being persuaded that the blood of Christ and his perfect righteousness shall bear me harmless through it all; or shall I be dragged with terror and dismay? Shall the angel come and say, "Thou must enter?" Shall I bend my knee and cry, "Oh, it is all right," or shall I seek to escape? Now, thrust into the scale, do I see myself waiting for one solemn moment. My feet have touched the bottom of the scales, and there stand those everlasting weights and now which way are they turned? Which way shall it be? Do I descend in the scale with joy and delight, being found through Jesus' righteousness to be full weight, and so accepted; or must I rise, light, frivolous, unsound in all my fancied hopes, and kick the beam? Oh, shall it be, that I must go where the rough hand of vengeance shall seize, and drag me downward, into fell despair? Can you picture the moments of suspense? I can see a poor man standing on the drop with the rope round his neck, and oh, what an instant of apprehension must that be; what thoughts of horror must float through his soul! How must a world of misery be compressed into a second? But O. my hearers, there is a far more terrible moment still for you that are Godless, Christless, careless: that have made a profession of religion, and yet have it not in your hearts. I see you in the scales. but what shall we say? The wailings of hell seem not sufficient to express your misery, In the scales without Christ! Not long ere you shall be in the jaws of hell, without pity and without compassion. O, my dear hearers! if you could hope to get to heaven without being weighed—if God would believe what you say without testing you, I would not care admit asking you this morning to ascertain the state of your own hearts. But if God will try you, try yourselves; if he will judge you, judge your own hearts. Don't say that because you profess to be religious therefore you are right—that because others imagine you to be safe that therefore you are so. Weigh yourselves put your hearts into the balance. Do not be deceived. Pull the bandage from your eyes, that your blindness may be removed, and that you may pass a just opinion upon yourselves as to what you are. I would have you not only see yourselves as others see you, but I would have you see yourselves as God sees you; for that after all, is your real state; his eye is not to be mistaken; he is the God of but, and just and right is he. How fearful a thing will it be, if any of us who are members of Christ's church shall be cast into hell at last. The higher we ascend, the greater will be our fall, like Icarus in the old parable, who flew aloft with waxen wings, till the sun did melt them and he fell. And some of you are flying like that: you are flying up with waxen wings. what if the terrible heat of the judgement day should melt them! I sometimes try to picture, how terrible the reverse to me if found to be rejected at last. Let what I shall say for myself suit for all. Nay, and must it be, if I live in this world and think I am a Christian and am not—must it be that I must go from the songs of the sanctuary to the cursings of the synagogue of Satan? Must I go from the cup of the Eucharist to the cup of devils? Must I go from the table of the Lord to the feast of fiends? Shall these lips that now proclaim the word of Jesus, one day utter the wailings of perdition? Shall this tongue that has sung the praises of the Redeemer be moved with blasphemy? Shall it be that this body which has been the receptacle of so many a mercy—shall it become the very house and home of every misery that vengeance can invent? Shall these eyes that now look on God's people one day behold the frightful sights of spirits destroyed in that all-consuming fire? And must it be that the ears that have heard the hallelujahs of this morning, shall one day hear the shrieks, and groans, and howls, of the lost and damned spirits? It must be so if we be not Christ's. Oh how frightful will it be! Methinks I see some grave professor at last condemned to hell. There are multitudes of sinners, lying in their irons, and tossing on their beds of flame; lifting themselves

upon their elbows for a moment, then seem to forget their tortures as they see the professor come in, and they cry—"Art thou become like one of us? Is the preacher himself damned? What! is the deacon of the church below, come to sit with drunkards, and with swearers? "Ah," they cry, "aha, aha, art thou bound up in the same bundle with us after all?" Surely the mockery of hell must be itself a most fearful torture; professing sinners mocked by those who never professed religion.

But mortal life can ne'er describe the miseries of a disappointed blasted hope, when that hope is lost—it involves the loss of mercy, the loss of Christ, the loss of life—and it involves moreover, the terrible destruction and the awful vengeance of Almighty God. Let us one and all go home this day, when yet God's sky is heavy, and let us bend ourselves at his altar, and cry for mercy. Every man apart—husband apart from wife. Apart, let us seek our chambers of praying again and again, "Lord renew me: Lord forgive me: Lord accept me." And whilst, mayhap, the tempest which is now lowering over the sky, and ere another tempest direr still shall fall on us with its fearful terrors, may you find peace. May we not then find ourselves lost, lost for ever, where hope can never comet It shall be my duty to search myself. I hope I shall be enabled to put myself into the scale; promise me my hearers, that each of you will do the same.

I was told one day this week by some one, that having preached for several Sabbaths lately upon the comforting doctrines of God's Word, he was afraid that some of you would begin to console yourselves with the idea that you were God's elect when perhaps you were not. Well, at least, such a thing shall not happen, if I have done what I hoped to do this morning. God bless you, for Jesus sake.

His Name—the Mighty God

A Sermon

(No. 258)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 19th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“The mighty God.”—Isaiah 9:6.

OTHER TRANSLATIONS of this divine title have been proposed by several very eminent and able scholars. Not that they have any of them been prepared to deny that this translation is after all most accurate; but rather that whilst there are various words in the original, which we render by the common appellation of “GOD,” it might be possible so to interpret *this* as to show more exactly its definite meaning. One writer, for example, thinks the term might be translate! “The Irradiator,”—he who gives light to men. Some think it bears the meaning of “The Illustrious,”—the bright and the shining one. Still there are very few, if any, who are prepared to dispute the fact that our translation is the most faithful that could possibly be given—the mighty God.”

The term here used for God, *El*, is taken from a Hebrew or root, which, as I take it, signifies strength; and perhaps a literal translation even of that title might be, “The Strong one,” the strong God. But there is added to this an adjective in the Hebrew, expressive of mightiness, and the two taken together express the omnipotence of Christ, his real deity and his omnipotence, as standing first and foremost among the attributes which the prophet beheld. “The mighty God.” I do not propose this morning to enter into any argument in proof of the divinity of Christ, because my text does not seem to demand it of me. It does not say that Christ *shall be* “the mighty God,”—that is affirmed in many other places of Sacred writ; but here it says, “He shall be *called* Wonderful,” *called* “Counsellor,” *called*, “The mighty God;” and I think that therefore I may be excused from entering into any proof of the fact, if I am at least able to establish the truth of that which is here foretold, inasmuch as Christ is indeed called at this day, and shall be called to the end of the world, “the mighty God.”

First, this morning, I shall speak for a moment on *the folly of those who profess to be his followers, but who do not call him “the mighty God.”* In the second place I shall try to show *how the true believer practically calls Christ “the mighty God,” in many of the acts which concern his salvation;* and then I shall close by noticing *how Jesus Christ has proved himself to be indeed “the mighty God” to us, and in the experience of his church.*

I. First let me point out THE FOLLY OF THOSE WHO PROFESS TO BE THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, YET DO NOT, AND WILL, NOT, CALL HIM GOD. The question has sometimes been proposed to me, how it is that those of us who hold the divinity of Christ manifest what is called uncharitableness towards those who deny him. We do continually affirm that an error, with regard to the divinity of Christ, is absolutely fatal, and that a man cannot be right in his judgment upon any part of the gospel unless he think rightly of him who is *personally* the very center of all the purposes of heaven, and the foundation of all the hopes of earth. Nor can we admit of any latitudinarianism here. We extend the right hand of fellowship to all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; but we cannot exchange our Christian greetings with those who deny

him to be “very God of very God.” And the reason is sometimes asked; for say our opponents, “We are ready to give the right hand of fellowship to you, why don’t you do so to us?” Our reply shall be given thus briefly: “You have no right to complain of us, seeing that in this matter we stand on the defensive. When you declare yourselves to believe that Christ is not the Son of God, you may not be conscious of it, but you have charged us with one of the blackest sins in the entire catalogue of crime. “The Unitarians must, to be existent, charge the whole of us, who worship Christ, with being idolators. Now idolatry is a sin of the most heinous character; it is not an offense against men it is true, but it is an intolerable offense against the majesty of God. We are ranked by Unitarians, if they be consistent, with the Hottentots. “No,” say they, “we believe that you are sincere in your worship.” So is the Hottentot; he bows down before his Fetich, his block of wood or stone, and he is an idolator; and although you charge us with bowing before a man, yet we do hold that you have laid at our cool a sin insufferably gross, and we are obliged to repel your accusation with some severity. You have so insulted us by denying the Godhead of Christ, you have charged us with so great a crime, that you cannot expect us to sit coolly down and blandly smile at the imputation. It matters not what a Man worships, if it be not God, he is an idolater. There is no distinction in principle between worship to a god of mud and a god of gold, nay further, there is no distinction between the worship of an onion and the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. These are alike idolatries. And though Christ be confessed by the Socinian to be the best of men, perfection’s own self; yet if he be nothing more, the vast mass of the Christian world is deliberately assailed with the impudent accusation of being idolators. Yet those who charge us with idolatry, expect us to receive them with cordial kindness. It is not in flesh and blood for us to do so, if we take the low ground of reason; it is not in grace or truth to do so, if we take the high ground of revelation. As wren, we are willing to shew them respect, we regard them, we pray for them, we have no anger or enmity against them. But when we come to the point of theology, we cannot as we profess to be followers of Christ, tamely see ourselves charged with an offense so dreadful and so heinous as that of idol worship.

I confess I would almost rather be charged with a religion that extenuated murder, than with one that justified idolatry. Murder, great as the offense is, is but the slaying of man; but idolatry is in its essence the killing of God; it is the attempt to thrust the Eternal Jehovah out of his seat, and to foist into his place the work of his own hand, or the creature of my own conceit. Shall a man charge me with being so besotted as to worship a mere man shall he tell me I am so low and groveling in my intellect, that I should stoop down to worship my own fellow—creature? and yet does he expect me after that to receive him as a brother professing the same faith? I cannot understand his presumption. The charge against our sanctity of heart is so tremendous, the accusation is so frightful, that if there have been some severity and bitterness of temper in the controversy, the sin lies upon our opponent, and not on us. For he has charged us with a crime so dreadful, that an upright man must repel it as an insult. But to go further; if Jesus Christ be not a Divine person—if I could once imagine that he was no more than a mere man, I should prefer Mahomet to Christ; and if you ask me why, I think I could clearly prove to demonstration, that Mahomet was a greater prophet than Christ. If Jesus Christ be not the Son of God, coequal, co-eternal with the Father, he so spoke as to induce that belief in the minds of his own disciples, and of his adversaries likewise. Mahomet, with regard to the unity of the Godhead, is so clear and so distinct, that there is no Mahometan to this day, that has ever fallen into idolatry. You will find that throughout the whole of the Mahometan world the cry is still sternly uttered and faithfully believed, “There is but one

God, and Mahomet is his prophet." Now, if Christ were but a good man and a prophet, why did he not speak more decisively? Why has he not left on record a war cry for the Christian, which would be as explicit and decisive as that of Mahomet? If Christ did not mean to teach that he himself is God, at least he was not very clear and definite in his denial and he has left his disciples extremely in the dark, the proof whereof is to be found in the fact, that at the present day, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the whole of the professed followers of Christ, do receive him, and bow down before him, as being the very God. And if he it not God, I deny his right to be esteemed as a prophet. If he is not God, he was an impostor, the grandest, the greatest of deceivers that ever existed. This, of course, is no argument to the man who denies the faith, and does not avow himself to be a follower of Christ. But to the man that it Christ's follower, I do hold that the argument is irresistible, that Christ could not have been a good and great prophet, if he were not what he certainly led us to believe himself to be, the Son of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God,—he very God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that is made.

I will say yet another thing, which may startle the believer, but which is intended rather to reduce the heterodox doctrine of Christ not being God, to an absurdity, If Christ were not the Son of God, his death, so far from being a satisfaction for sin, was a death most richly and righteously deserved. The Sanhedrim before which He was tried was the recognized and authorised legislature of the country. He was brought before that Sanhedrim, charged with blasphemy, and it was upon that charge that they condemned him to die, because he made himself the Son of God. Now, I do not hesitate honestly to aver, that if I had been called on to plead in that ease, I should have pleaded an avowal, and that moreover, I should have stood up, and said and felt, that I had a clear case before me, which nothing but lying and perjury could ever have put on one side, if Jesus of Nazareth had been charged with having declared himself to be the Son of God. Why, his whole preaching seemed to derive from thence it's unrivalled authority. There was continually in his actions and in his words, a claim to be something more than man ever could lay claim to. And when he was brought before the Sanhedrim, witnesses enough might have been found, to prove that he had made himself the Son of God; if he were not so, his condemnation for blasphemy was the justest sentence that ever was pronounced, and his crucifixion on Calvary, was absolutely the most righteous execution that ever was performed by the hand of the government. It is his being verily God, that frees him from the charge of blasphemy, It is the fact that he is God. and that his Godhead is not to be denied, that makes his death an unrighteous decide at the hand of apostate man, and renders it, as before God, an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of all the people whom he redeemed with his most precious blood But if he be not God, I do repeat, that there is no reason whatever, Why we should have had a New Testament written; for there would be then nothing in the sublime central-fact of that New Testament but the righteous execution of one, who certainly deserved to die.

Do you remember, my dear friends, when the apostle Paul was preaching on the resurrection of the dead, in his letter to the Corinthians, how he uses an *ex post facto* argument, to show the natural consequences, if it were possible to overturn the truths He says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and ye are yet in your sins." Now, I may fairly use the apostle's line of argument in reference to the Godhead and Sonship of Christ, of which his resurrection gave such a palpable demonstration: "If Christ be not the Son of God, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and ye are yet in your sins all our visions of heaven are blasted and withered; the brightness of our hope is quenched for ever; that rock on which our trust

is built, turns out to be nothing better than mere sand if the divinity of Christ be not proved. All the joy and consolation we ever had in this world, in our belief that his blood was sufficient to atone for sin, has been but a dream of fancy and a “figment of idle brains;” all the communion we have ever had with him has been but an illusion and a trance, and all the hopes we have of beholding his face in glory, and of being satisfied when we awake in his likeness, are but the foulest delusions that ever cheated the hopes of man. Oh, my brethren, and can any of you believe that the blood of all the martyrs has been shed as a witness to a lie? Have all those who have rotted in Roman dungeons, or have been burned at the stake because they witnessed that Christ was God, died in vain? Verily, if Christ be not God, we are of all men the most miserable. To what purpose is the calumny and abuse that we have had to endure day after day; to what purpose are our repentance, our sighs, our tears; to what purpose is our faith; to what purpose have our fears and bodings been supplanted by our hope and confidence; to what purpose our joy and our rejoicing, if Christ be not the Son of God? Will you put yourselves all down for fools; can you imagine that God’s Word has misguided you; that prophets and apostles, and martyrs and saints, have all leagued together to lead you into a trap and to delude your souls? God forbid that we should think such a thing. There is no folly in the world that has in it so much as a do it of madness, compared with the folly of denying the divinity of Christ, and then professing to be his followers. No, beloved:

“Let all the forms that men devise,
Assault our faith with treacherous art;
We’ll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to our heart!”

We will write *this* on the forefront of our banner,—Christ is God; co-equal and co-eternal with his Father; very God of very God, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God.”

II. This brings me to the second part of the subject: HOW DO WE CALL CHRIST “THE DIGNITY GOD?” Here there is no dispute whatever; I am now about to speak of matters of pure fact. Whether Christ be mighty God or not, it is quite certain that we are in the constant habit of calling him so. Not, I mean, by the mere utterance of the term, but we do so in a stronger way—n fact;—and actions speak louder than words.

Now, beloved, I will soon prove that you and I are in the habit of calling Christ God. And I will prove it first, because it is our delight, and our joy and our privilege to attribute to him the attributes of Deity.

In hours of devout contemplation, how often do we look up to him as being *the Eternal Son*. You and I sit down in our chambers, and in our house of prayer, and as we muse upon the great covenant of grace, we are in the habit of speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ’s everlasting love to his people. This is one of the jewels of our life, one of the ornaments with which we array ourselves as a bride doth. This is a part of the manna that tasteth like wafers made with honey upon which our souls are wont to feed. We speak of God’s eternal love, of our names having been inscribed in his eternal book, and of Christ’s having borne them from before the foundation of the world upon his breast, as our great high-priest, our remembrancer before the throne of heaven. In so doing, we have virtually called him the mighty God; because none but God could have been from everlasting to everlasting. As often as we profess the doctrine of election, we call Christ the mighty God; as often as we talk of the eternal covenant, ordered in all things and sure, so often do we proclaim him to be God: because we speak of him as an everlasting one, and none could be from everlasting but one who is self-existent, who is God.

Again: how frequently do we repeat over to ourselves that precious verse, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” We are always in the habit of ascribing to him *immutability*. Some of our choicest hymns are founded on that circumstance, and our richest hopes flow from that attribute. We know that all things will change. We are convinced that we ourselves are mutable as the winds, and as easily moved as the sand by the waves of the sea; but we know that our Redeemer liveth, and we cannot entertain a suspicion of any change in his love, his purpose, or his power How often do we sing:—

“Immutable his will
 Though dark may be my frame,
 His loving heart is still Unchangeably the same.
 My soul through many changes goes:
 His love no variation knows!”

Do you not see that you have in fact called him God, because none but God is immutable? The creature changes. This is written on the forefront of creation—“Change!” The mighty ocean, that knows no furrows on its brow, changeth at times, and at times shifteth its level. It moveth hither and thither, and we know that it is to be licked up with forked tongues of flame, and yet we ascribe to Christ immutability. We do, then, in fact, ascribe to him, divinity; for, none but the divine can be immutable.

Is it not also our joy to believe that wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ’s name, there is he in the midst of them? Do we not repeat it in all our prayer-meetings? Perhaps some minister in Australia began the solemnities of public worship this day with the reflection that Jesus Christ was with him, according to his promise, and I know that as I came here the same reflection comforted me, “Yea, I am with you always even to the end of the world.”—That wherever a Christian is found, there God is. And though there be but two or three met in a barn, or on the greensward under the canopy of God’s blue sky, yet there Christ vouchsafes his presence. Now I ask you, have we not ascribed to Christ, omnipresence; and who can be omnipotent but God? Have we not thus in feet then, though not in words, called Christ “God?” How is it possible for us to dream of Him as being here, and there, and everywhere; in the bosom of his Father, with the angels, and in the hearts of the contrite all at the same time, if he be not God? Grant me that he is omnipresent, and you have said that he is God, for none but God can be present everywhere. Again, are we not also wont to ascribe to Christ omniscience? You believe when your heart is aching that Christ knows your pains, and that he reckons every groan; or at least if *you* do not believe it, it is always *my* satisfaction to know that—

“He feels at his heart,
 All my sighs and my groans.”

And so he does yours. Wherever you are, you believe that he hears your prayers that he sees your tears, that he knows your wants, that he is ready to pardon your sins; that you are better known to him, than you are to yourself. You believe that he searches your hearts, and tries your reins, and that you never can come to him without finding him full of sympathy, and full of love. Now do you not see that you have ascribed conscience to him. and therefore, though not in words, you have, in accents louder than words, called him the mighty God, for you have assumed that he is omniscient; and who can be omniscient but the very God of very God?

I shall not stop to descant upon the other attributes, but I think we might prove that we have each of us ascribed to Christ all the attributes of the Godhead in our daily life and in our constant

trust and intercession. I am sure that it is true of many loving hearts of God's own children here. We have called him the mighty God, and it others have not called him so, nevertheless the text is verified by our faith. "He shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God." So he is, and so he shall be, world without end.

And now I have another proof to offer, that Christ is called "the mighty God." We call him so in many of his offices. We believe this morning that Christ is the mediator between God and man. If we would understand the term mediator or daysman, we must interpret it as Job did; one "that might lay his hand upon us both." We are accustomed to say that Jesus Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, and we offer our prayers to God through him, because we believe that he mediates between us and the Father. Let it once be granted then that Christ is the mediator, and you have asserted his divinity. You have virtually called him the Son of God; and you have granted his humanity, for he must put his hand upon both; therefore he must put his hand upon man in our nature, he must be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and be in all points like as we are. But he is not a mediator unless he can put his hand upon God, unless as fellow of the Eternal One he shall be able without blasphemy to place his hand upon the divine Being. There is no mediatorship unless the hand is put on both and who could put his hand on God but God? Can cherubim or seraphim talk of laying their hands on the Divine? Shall they touch the Infinite? "Dark with insufferable light his skirts appear"—then what is He Himself in the glorious Essence of Deity?—an all-devouring and consuming fire. Only God can put his hand on God, and yet Christ hath this high prerogative, for mark, there is no mediatorship established, there cannot be, unless the two are linked. If you wished to build a bridge you might commence on this aide of the river, but if you have not connected it with the other aide, you have not built the bridge. There can be no mediatorship unless the parties are fully linked. The ladder must have its feet on earth but it must reach to heaven, for if there were a single breach we should fall from its summit and perish. There must be entire communication between the two. Do you not see therefore that in calling Christ mediator we have in fact called him the mighty God.

But again, we call Christ our Saviour. Now, have any of you that foolish credulity which would lead you to trust in a man for the everlasting salvation of your soul? If you have, I pity you: your proper place is not in a Protestant assembly, but among the deluded votaries of Rome. If you can commit the keeping of your soul to one like yourself, I must indeed mourn over you, and pray that you may be taught better. But you do trust your salvation to him whom God hath set forth for a propitiation, do you not, O follower of Jesus? Can you not say all your hope is fixed on him, for he is all your salvation and all your desire? Does not your spirit rest on that unbuttressed pillar of his entire satisfaction, his precious death and burial, his glorious resurrection and ascension? Now, observe, you are either resting on man, or else you have declared Christ to be "the mighty God." When I say I put my faith in him, I do most honestly declare that I dare not trust even to him, if I did not believe him to be God. I could not put my trust in any being that was merely, created. God forbid that my folly should ever go to such an extent as that. I would sooner trust myself than trust any other man, and yet I dare not trust myself, for I should be accursed. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." "And would the Socinian have me to believe that I am to preach faith in Christ, and that yet, if my hearers trust Christ, they will be accursed, as they assuredly must be, if he is nothing but man, for again I repeat it, "cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." You get a blessing by faith in Jesus, but how? Is it not because—"Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is?" "Christ is very Jehovah, and therefore the blessing

comes to those who trust in him. So, then, as often as ye put your trust in Jesus, for time and eternity, ye have called him “the mighty God.”

This subject is capable of the greatest expansion, and I do believe there is sufficient interest attaching to it to warrant me in keeping you to a late hour this day, but I shall not do so. There has been enough said, I think, to prove at least, that we are in the habit continually of calling Christ “the mighty God.”

III. My third proposition is to explain to you now CHRIST HAS PROVED HIMSELF TO US TO BE “THE MIGHTY GOD.” And here beloved, without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness, for the passage from which the text is taken says, “Unto us a child is born.” A child! what can that do? A child it totters in its walk, it trembles in its steps—and it is a child newly born. Born! what an infant hanging on its mother’s breast, an infant deriving its nourishment from a woman? That! can that work wonders? Yea, saith the prophet, “Unto us a child is born.” But then it is added, “Unto us a Son is given.” Christ was not only born, but given. As man he is a child born, as God he is the Son given. He emotes down from on high; he is given by God to become our Redeemer. But here behold the wonder! “His name is name,” this child’s name, “shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God.” Is this child, then, to us the mighty God? If so, brethren, without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness indeed! And yet, just let us look, look through the history of the church, and discover whether we have not ample evidence to substantiate it. This child born, this Son given, came into the world to enter into the lists against sin. For thirty years and upwards he had to struggle and wrestle against temptations more numerous and more terrible than man had ever known before. Adam fell when but a woman tempted him; Eve fell when but a serpent offered fruit to her, but Christ, the second Adam, stood invulnerable against all the shafts of Satan though tempted he was in all points, like as we are. Not one arrow out of the quiver of hell was spared; the whole were shot against him. Every arrow was aimed against him with all the might of Satan’s are here, and that is no little! And yet, without sin or taint of sin, more than conqueror he stood. Foot to foot with Satan, in the solitude of the wilderness hand to hand with him on the top of the pinnacle of the temple; side by side with him in the midst of a busy crowd—yet ever more than conqueror. He gave him battle wherever the adversary willed to meet him, and at last, when Satan gathered up all his might, and seized the Saviour in the garden of Gethsemne, and crushed him till he sweat as it were great drops of blood, then when the Saviour said, “Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt,” the tempter was repulsed. “Hence, hence!” Christ seemed to say; and away the tempter fled, nor dare return again. Christ, in all his conquests over sin, does seem to me to have established his Godhead. I never heard of any other creature that could endure such temptation as this. Look at the angels in heaven. How temptation entered there I know not; but this I know, that Satan, the great archangel, sinned, and I know that he became the tempter to the rest of his companions, and drew with him a third part of the stars of heaven. Angels were but little tempted, some of them not tempted at all, and yet they fell. And then look at man; slight was his temptation, yet he fell. It is not in a creature to stand against temptation; he will yield, if the temptation be strong enough. But Christ stood, and it seems to me, that in his standing he proved Himself to have the omni-radiant purity, the immaculate holiness of Him before whom angels veil their faces, and cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.”

But these proofs might appear insufficient, if he did not accomplish more than this. We know also that Christ proved himself to be the “mighty God” from the fact that at last all the sins of all his people were gathered upon his shoulders, and “he bare them in his own body on the tree.” The

heart of Christ became like a reservoir in the midst of mountains. All the tributary streams of iniquity, and every drop of the sins of his people, ran down and gathered into one vast lake, deep as hell, and shoreless as eternity. All these met, as it were, in Christ's heart, and yet he endured them all. With many a sign of human weakness, but with convincing signs of divine omnipotence, he took all our griefs and carried all our sorrows. The divinity within strengthened his manhood, and though wave after wave rolled over his head, till he sank in deep mire where there was no standing, and all Gods waves and his billows had gone over him, yet did he lift up his head, and snore than a conqueror, at length, he put the sins of his people to a public execution. They are dead. They have ceased to be; and, if they be sought for, they shall not be found any more for ever. Certainly if this be true, he is "the mighty God" indeed.

But he did more than this, he descended into the grave, and there he slept, fast fettered with the cold chains of death. But the appointed hour arrives—the sunlight of the third day gave the warning, and he snapped the bands of death as if they were but tow, and came forth to life as "the Lord of life and glory." His flesh did not see corruption, for he was not able to be holden by the bands of death. And who shall be the death of death, the plague of the grave, the destroyer of destruction, but God? Who but immortal life, who but the Self-existent, shall trample out the fires of hell; who, but he whose Being is eternal, without beginning, and without end, shall burst the shackles of the grave? He proved himself then, when he led captivity captive, and crushed death and ground his iron limbs to powder—he proved himself then to be the mighty God.

Oh, my soul, thou canst say, that he has proved himself in thy heart to be a mighty God. Sins, many hath he forgiven thee and relieved thy conscience of the keen sense of guilt, griefs innumerable hath he assuaged, temptations insurmountable hath he overcome; virtues once impossible hath he implanted, grace in its fullness hath he promised, and in its measure hath he given. My soul bears record that what has been done for me could never have been done by a mere man; and you would rise from your seats, I am sure, if it were needful, and say, "Yes, he that hath loved me, washed me from my sins, and made me what I am, must be God, none but God could do what he has done, could bear so patiently, could bless so lavishly, forgive so freely, enrich so infinitely. He is, he must be, we will crown him such—"The mighty God."

And, in conclusion, lest I weary you, permit me now to say, I beg and beseech of you all present, as God the Spirit shall help you, come and put your trust in Jesus Christ, he is "the mighty God." Oh, Christians, believe him more than ever, cast your troubles constantly on him; he is "the mighty God;" go to Him in all your dilemmas, when the enemy cometh in like a flood, this mighty God shall make a way for your deliverance; take to him your griefs, this mighty God can alleviate them all; tell him your backslidings and sins, this mighty God shall blot them out. And, O sinners, ye that feel your need of a Saviour, come to Christ and trust him for he is "the mighty God." Go to your houses, and fall on your knees and confess your sins, and then cast your poor, guilty, helpless, naked, defenceless souls before his omnipotence, for he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, because when he died he was not manhood, without divinity, but he was "the mighty God." This, I say, we will write on our banners, from this day forth and for ever; this shall be our joy and our song—the child bow and the son given is to us "the mighty God."

* The reader is referred to Nos. 214 and 215 of the "New Park Street Pulpit," in which sermons severally entitled "Wonderful," "Counsellor," will be found.

A Home Mission Sermon

A Sermon

(No. 259)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 26th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”—Ecclesiastes 9:10.

IF GOD had willed it we might each one of us have entered heaven at the moment of our conversion. It was not absolutely necessary for our preparation for immortality that we should tarry here. It is possible for a man to be taken to heaven, and to be found meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, though he hath but believed in Christ a solitary moment. The thief upon the cross had no long time for the process of sanctification; for thus spake the Saviour. “Verily I say unto thee this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” It is true that in our case sanctification is a long and continued process, and we shall not be perfected—the being of sin shall not be cast out—till we lay aside our bodies and enter within the veil. But nevertheless, it is quite certain that if God had so willed it, he might have sanctified us in a moment. He might have changed us from imperfection to perfection, he might have cut out the very roots of sin, and have destroyed the very being of corruption, and have taken us to heaven *instanter*, if so he had willed it. Notwithstanding that, we are here. and why are we here? Would God keep his children out of paradise a single moment longer than was necessary? Yet it is not absolutely necessary *for them*. Then, why are they here? Does God delight to tantalise his people by keeping them in a wilderness when they might be in Canaan? Will he shut them up in prison when he might give them instant liberty, unless there be some overwhelming reason for his delay in giving them the fullness of their life and bliss? Why are they here? Why is the army of the living God still on the battle field? One charge might give them the victory. Why are God’s ships still at sea? One breath of his wind might waft them to the haven. Why are his children still wandering hither and thither through a maze, when hen a solitary word from his lips would bring them into the center of their hopes in heaven? The answer is; they are here that they may glorify God, and that they may bring others to know his love. We are not here in vain, dear brethren. We are here on earth like sowers scattering good seed; like ploughmen ploughing up the fallow ground. We are here as heralds, telling to sinners around

“What a dear Saviour we have found,”

and heralding the coming of our Master. We are here as the salt to preserve a world, which else would become putrid and destroyed. We are here as the very pillars of this world’s happiness: for when God shall take away his saints, the universal moral fabric “shall tumble to its fall; and great shall be the crash, when the righteous shall be removed, and the foundations shall be shaken. Taking it therefore as granted that the people of God are here to do something to bless their fellow-men, our text comes in very pertinently as the rule of our life. May God help us to practice it by giving us much of his powerful Spirit. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” This is what thou art here for. Thou art here for a certain purpose. That purpose will soon be ended, and whether it be accomplished or unaccomplished, there shall never be a second opportunity for

attempting it, “for there is no work, nor device nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, wither hither thou goest.” So far as this world is concerned, the grave is the end of our doing. So far as this time and state are concerned, the grave shall be the burial of our wisdom, our knowledge, and our devices.

Now, I shall this morning, first, endeavor to explain *the preacher's exhortation*; and then endeavor to *enforce it by evangelical arguments*.

I. First, I shall explain THE PREACHER'S EXHORTATION. I shall do so by dividing it into three parts. What shall I do?—“Whatsoever thy hand findeth.” How shall I do it?—“Do it with thy might.”—And then, why shall I do it?—“For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.

1. First, then, are there not some here who are saying, I hope I love Christ; I desire to serve him, for I have been saved by his work upon the cross; *what then can I do?* “The answer is—“whatsoever thy hand findeth to do.” Here we will observe, first, that this refers us to the works that are near at hand. You are not called upon to-day, the most of you, to do works which your eye sees far away in Hindostan or China. The most of you are called especially to do the work which is near at hand. People are always desiring to be doing something miles off, If they could but be somewhere else what wonders they would accomplish! Many a young man thinks if he could stand up under a banyan tree, and discourse to the black faces in India, how eloquent he might be. My dear fellow, why don't you try the streets of London first, and see whether you are eloquent there. Many a lady imagines that if she could move in a high circle she would no doubt become another Lady Huntingdon, and do wonders. But why cannot you do wonders in the circle in which God has placed you? He does not call you to do that which is leagues away, and which is beyond your power; it is that which your hand findeth to do I am persuaded that our home duties,—the duties which come near to us in our own streets, in our own lanes and alleys,—are the duties in which we ought most of us mainly to glorify Christ. Why will you be stretching out your hands to that which you cannot reach? Do that which is near,—which is at your hand. People sometimes come to their minister and say, “What shall I do for Christ?” In nine cases out of ten it is evidence of a lazy, idle spirit, when men ask what they shall do. For if they were really in earnest,—wanting to do something they would find themselves placed in the midst of such a press of work, that the question would not be, “What can I do?” but “Which out of all these shall I do first? for here is enough to fill an angel's hands, and occupy more than all a mortal's time.” Very often I find men ambitious to serve God in an orbit in which they will never move. Many say, I wish I could become a preacher.” Yes, but you are not called to be a preacher it may be. Serve God in that which your hand findeth present. Serve him in your immediate situation, where you now are. Can you not distribute tracts? “Oh yes,” you say, “but I was thinking of doing something else.” Yes, but God put you there to do that. Could you not teach an infant class in the Sunday School?” I was thinking of being the superintendent of the Sunday School.” Were you, indeed? but your hand has not found out how to get there. Do what thy hand has found: it has found an infant class to teach. Could you not endeavor to instruct your family, and teach your servants in the way of God—God helping? “Oh yes,” says one, “but I was thinking about organizing a Dorcas Society, or a Ladies' Visiting or Tract Distributing Society.” Yes, but your hand has not found that out yet. Just do that first which is nearest to you. Begin at home. When Jerusalem was built, every man built before his own house. Do you the same? There is a wise provision by our rulers, that every man should cleanse the street in front of his own house. Why will you, who fire here in Southwark walk all the way to Islington to cleanse the street in front

of somebody else's door? Stop and attend to your own work. and if everybody will do that which comes immediately under his own eyes, and is found out by his own hand then how much may be accomplished. Depend upon it, there is more wisdom in that than some of us dream. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it." Do not be prowling about for work, but do it where it is when thy hand findeth it.

Again, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," refers to works that are possible. There are many things which our *heart* findeth to do that we never shall do. It is well it is in our heart, God accepts the will for the deed. But if we would be eminently useful, we must not be content with forming schemes in our heart, and talking of them with our lips. We must get plan" that are tangible, schemes that we can really manage, ideas that we can really carry out; and so we shall fulfill the exhortation of Solomon, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it." I will give you an illustration not many months ago in a certain magazine, which I will not mention, there was a supplement given upon China; in which supplement the churches represented by that magazine were exhorted to raise enough money to send a *hundred* missionaries to China. There was a very earnest appeal made to the churches—a glorious blast of trumpets as if something very great was coming. The mountain was in labor, and labor it did. Now, I have been told that the secretary of the Chinese mission called upon the editor of the aforesaid magazine, and said, "I see you have a proposal to send a hundred missionaries to China. Will you strike the two off and find money enough to send one. It is said that they who aim at the moon will shoot higher than those who shoot at a bush. It may be correct, they may shoot higher, but I do not think they are so likely to hit their mark. Shooting high is not the thing: it is hitting what you shoot at now, if they had said, "We will do our utmost to send one missionary to China," they might have effected it; but they were talking about a hundred and they have not succeeded, nor are they likely to do".

The exhortation of our preacher would come home to such people. They have got it in their hearts to do it; they say when they grow big enough they mean to accomplish great things. "Who art thou. O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Now, instead of meddling with that great mountain, suppose you try your faith upon a fig tree first; and, then, if you moved that first, you might have confidence to move a mountain. John Bunyan was a very wise man when he thought once he would try to work miracles, Instead of ordering the sun and moon to go back several degrees, as he rode along he thought he would tell the puddles in the road to become dry. It was a miracle that would not interfere with anybody, and therefore a very proper one to begin with. But in the beginning the thought came into his mind, "Pray first;" and when he prayed he could not find any promise that he could dry up the puddles, and so he determined to leave them alone. I hope those men who come with some splendid vision in their heads would only try to do what they can and no more. When they become giants let them do a giant's work, but as long as they are dwarfs, let them do a dwarf's work Remember, the exhortation of the great man is, to do, not great things, but to do the things that thy hand findeth to do—present things, possible things. Do not be scheming and speculating about what you would do if your old aunt were to leave you twenty thousand pounds, or what you would do if you were to become prime minister, and so forth. Do what you can, in your workshop or shed, or with a needle in your hand; and if ever you have a scepter—which is not likely—and you use your needle well, you would be the most likely person to use your scepter well also.

There is another word of exhortation which seems to strike me as being very necessary when addressing God's people, it is this: "*Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do." Suppose, now, the duty

which lies against our door to be a very disagreeable one. A sad thing that any duty should be disagreeable to the man who has been saved by Christ, but so it is. There are some duties, which while we are nothing but poor flesh and blood will always be less agreeable than certain others; yet, mark you, though the duties seem to you to be degrading and disagreeable, contrary to your taste, yet the exhortation hath it, "*Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Whether it be the visitation of the poorest of the poor or the teaching of the most ignorant, whether the hewing of wood or the drawing of water, the very lowest work in the Lord's house, if thy hand findeth it to do it. You will remark in many Christians, and possibly if you are wise you will remark in yourself, how we all have a preference to do those duties which we regard as being honorable, as coming strictly within the range of our own office, those which probably will be rewarded with the praise of men. But if there is any duty that shall never be heard of till the day of judgment, if there is any work that never shall be seen until the blaze of the last day shall manifest it to a blind world, then we generally slur such a duty and seek another. Oh, if we did but understand the true majesty of humility, and how great a thing it is for a Christian to do little things, to bow himself and to stoop, we should rather envy the meanest of the flock than the greatest, and each of us try to wash the saint's feet and perform the most menial service for the Master. Often, I think, when you and I are standing back for some humbling duty if Christ Jesus should come by that way and do it, how we should blush. Let me give you Christ's own picture. There was a poor wounded Samaritan who was left half dead. There was a priest coming to Jerusalem. He was busy with his sermon, looking over his notes, and thinking of what he should have to say to the people when he addressed them. Well, there was a poor fellow the other side of the road, wounded. It was no business of his—he was a preacher. If he went to interfere with that poor man's wounds, he was quite sure it would be such a ghastly sight that he would not be able to preach half so well, so he passed by. Well, then there came a Levite, a good respectable deacon in the sanctuary. "Well," he says, "I must make haste and catch the minister, or else I shall not be in time to read the hymns." It was no business of his to go and see after the poor man who was wounded. At last the Master himself came that way, and he, the head of the church, the prince of preachers, the great deacon, the great servant of servants, he did not disdain to bind up the broken heart, and to heal the poor man's wounds. There is a story told in the old American war, that once upon a time George Washington, the commander-in-chief, was going around among his soldiers. They were hard at work, lifting a heavy piece of timber at some fortification. There stood the corporal of the regiment calling out to his men, "Heave there, heave ahoy!" and giving them all kinds of directions. As large as possible the good corporal was. So Washington, alighting from his horse, said to him, "What is the good of your calling out to those men, why don't you help them yourself and do part of the work." The corporal drew himself up and said, "Perhaps you are not aware to whom you are speaking, sir; I am a corporal." "I beg your pardon," said Washington; "you are a corporal are you; I am sorry I should have insulted you." So he took off his own coat and waistcoat and set to work to help the men build the fortification. When he had done he said, "Mr. Corporal, I am sorry I insulted you, but when you have any more fortifications to get up, and your men won't help you, send for George Washington, the commander-in-chief, and I will come and help them." The corporal slunk away perfectly ashamed of himself. And so Christ Jesus might say to us, "Oh, you don't like teaching the poor; it is beneath your dignity; then let your commander-in-chief do it; he can teach the poor, he can wash the feet of the saints, he can visit the sick and afflicted—he came from heaven to do this, and he will set you the example." Surely we should each be ashamed of ourselves, and

declare from this time forward whatever it is, be it great or little, if it comes to our hand, and if God will but give us help and give us grace, we will do it with all our might. I have thus explained what we are to do.

2. And, now, *How are we to do it?* “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” First, “do it.” That is do it promptly; not fritter away your lives in setting down what you intend to do to-morrow as being a recompense for the idleness of to-day. No man ever served God by doing things tomorrow. If we have honored Christ and are blessed, it is by the things which we do to-day. For after all, the ticking of the clock saith—today! to-day! to-day! We have no other time in which to live. The past is gone; the future hath not come; we have, we never shall have, anything but the present. This is our all. let us do what our hand findeth to do. Young Christian, are you just converted? Do not wait until your experience has ripened into maturity before you attempt to serve God. And now to bring forth fruit. This very day, if it be the first day of your conversion, bring forth fruits meet for repentance—even now. And thou who art now in middle age, say not, “I will begin to serve Christ when my hair shall be frosty with age.” No. *Now* do it.—do it—“do it with thy might.” Oh that God would keep us to this—that we would always do our day’s work in our day, and serve him now. I have heard of a certain divine who was a preacher at Newgate. He preached a sermon divided into two parts: the first was to the saint, the second was to the sinner. When he had finished the first part, to the saint, in the morning, he said he would preach to the sinner the next Sunday morning, and then finish his sermon. There was a poor man who was hanged on the Monday, and who therefore never heard that part of the discourse which was best adapted to his case. How often may we be found in the like light. We may be saying, “I will do him good by-and-bye.” But he may be dead then, and our opportunity will be gone, or, what is just as likely, we may be dead also; and then all our opportunities will be passed, and it will be totally out of our power to do anything. Do it! do it! do it! This is what the church of Christ wants to have proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet in all her ranks, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it.” Put it not off one hour. Do it! Procrastinate not a day. “Procrastination is the thief of time.” Let him not steal thy time. Do it, at once. Serve thy God *now*; for *now* is all the time thou canst reckon on.

Then, the next words, “Do it with thy might.” Whatever you do for Christ, throw your whole soul into it Christ wants none to serve him with their fingers: he must have their hands their arms, their hearts, We must not give Christ a little slurred labor, which is done as a matter of course now and then; but when we do serve him, we must do it with all our bears, and soul, and strength, and might. Among the old Roman pagans, they were accustomed to slay the beasts and cut them open, in order to discover future events. If ever they cut open a bullock and could not find the heart, it was always considered by the people to be an ill omen. And depend upon it, if ye cut your works open and cannot find your hearts in them, it is an ill omen for your works—they are good for nothing, and their object shall never be accomplished. The worst part of the Christian church at this time is, that it seems as if many of our ministers and their churches had lost their hearts. Step into your churches and chapels, everything is orderly and precise. but where is the life, where is the power? I confess that I would rather address a congregation of ignorant men who are alive and enthusiastic, than a congregation of the most learned and orderly who are dead and blank, upon whose ears all the preaching in the world falls as but a dull monotony. About three weeks ago I was addressing a Methodist congregation. They leaped on their feet, now and then, and cried, “Hallelujah! Glory be to God!” My whole soul was stirred within me, and I felt that I could preach and preach again, and never grow weary while these people drink in the word with real life. I am

persuaded that real good was done, and that they did not forget what was said. But, then, our people take things so orderly; they come and take their seats so quietly; until it often seems that one might preach to a set of statues or wooden blocks, with just as much hope of effect as to preach to them. We want life, we want heart. heart in the ministry, heart in the deacons, heart in all the offices of the church, and until we have this we cannot expect the Master's blessing. You are going to teach in the Sunday school this afternoon, are you? How are you going to teach? "I am going to do as I have often done." Stand back I If you are going to serve Christ, stand back till you have got your heart with you, and take with you all your strength, and all your might, and say as David did, "Bless the Lord, and serve the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me." Serve the Master and spend yourself in your strength. I would rather have no sermon than a dull sermon, no teaching than sleepy teaching, no prayers than lifeless prayers. A cold religion is tasteless. Let us have a hot religion that will burn its way into the heart. this is the religion that will make its way in the world, and make itself respected, even though some pretend to despise it. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

But where is the might of a Christian? Let us not forget that. The might of a Christian is not in himself, for he is perfect weakness. His might lieth in the Lord of Hosts. It will be well for us if all we attempt to do is done in God's strength, or else it will not be done with might: it will be feebly and badly done. Whenever we attempt to serve a loaf in the winning of souls, let us first begin with prayer. Let us seek his help. Let us go on with prayer mixed with faith; and when we have concluded the work, let us commend it again to God with renewed faith and fresh prayer. What we do thus will be well done, and will not fail in its effect. But what we do merely with creature-strength, with the mere influence of carnal zeal, will come to nothing at all. "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," do it with that real might which God hath promised them that ask it, with that real wisdom which he giveth liberally, which he bestows on all who seek it meekly and reverently at his feet. God help us, then to carry out this exhortation, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it v with thy might."

3. And, now, the third part of the exhortation was, *Why?* We are to do it with all our might death is near. and when death comes there will be an end to all our serving God on earth, an end to our preaching, an end to our praying, an end to our doing aught for God's glory among the perishing souls of men. If we all lived in the light of our funerals how well should we live. Some of the old Romish monks always read their Bibles with a candle stuck in a skull. The light from a death's head may be an awful one, but it is a very profitable one. There is no way of living like that. There is an old monkish legend told of a great painter, who had begun a painting, but did not finish it; and as the legend went, he prayed that he might come back on earth that he might finish that painting. There is a picture now extant, representing him after he had come back to finish his picture. There is a solemnity about that man's look, as he paints away with all his might, for he had but little time allowed him, and a ghastliness, as if he knew that he must soon go back again, and wanted his labor to be finished. If you were quite sure of the time of your death, if you knew you had but a week or two to live, with what haste would you go round and bid farewell to all your friends; with what haste would you begin to set all matters right on earth, supposing matters are all right for eternity. But, Christian men like other men, forget that they are mortal, and even we who profess to see into the future, and declaring that we are looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, even we seem to think that we shall live here for ever. It is well that God puts a thorn into our nest, or else, often his own birds of Paradise would build their nests here and never mount higher. Let us pause a moment, and think that in a short time we must die.

The hour is not to be staved off. When yon winged arrow shall have ended its hasty journey, and found its target in this heart, then all is over. I may preach to you to-day and exhort you to flee from the wrath to come; but when this tongue is sealed in silence, I can no more warn you. If I have been unfaithful, and have not discharged my Master's message and faithfully told it, I cannot come back and tell it over again. Mother, you can pray for your children, now; but when death shall have sealed your eyes in darkness, there can be no more prayers lifted up for ever. You can teach them now in God's Word, and labor that they may be brought to know their mother's God, but it shall be all over then. You may now, O Sunday school teacher, instruct those children. and God blessing you, you may be their spiritual father and bring them to Christ; but it shall one day be whispered in your class, "teacher is dead;" and there is the end of your labor. Your children may come to your grave, and sit down there and weep, but from the clay-cold sod no voice of warning can come up. There, your warning and your love is lost, alike unknowing and unknown. And you, the servant of Christ, with great stores of wealth, you have this day money with which God's cause might be greatly helped; you have talent, too, which might fit you well to stand in the midst of the church and serve it. You are going the way of all flesh. Grey hairs are scattered here and there. You know that your end is approaching. When once death shall have come your ham! cannot devise liberal things; your brain cannot form new devices for the spread of your Master's kingdom, neither can your heart, then, bend and weep over sinners perishing, or your tongue address them with earnest exhortation. Think, dear friends, that all we can do for our fellows we must do, *now*. For the cerement shall soon enwrap us, the hands must soon hang down, and the eyes be shut, and the tongue be still. While we live let us live. There are no two live. accorded us on earth. If we build not now, the fabric can never be built. If now we spin not, the garment will never be woven. Work while ye live, and live while ye work; and God grant to each of us that we may discharge in this life all the desires of our hearts, in magnifying God and bringing sinners to the cross.

II. How, having thus explained and opened the exhortation, I shall pray that God's Holy Spirit may be solemnly with me while very briefly and very vehemently, I endeavor to **STIR UP ALL PROFESSORS OF RELIGION HERE PRESENT TO DO WHATSOEVER THEIR HANDS FINDETH TO DO, TO DO IT NOW, AND WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT.** If Christ Jesus should leave the upper world and come into the midst of this hall this morning, what answer could you give if after showing you his wounded hands and feet, and his rent side, he should put this question, "I have done all this for thee what hast thou done for me?" Let me put that question for him, and in his behalf. You have known his love some of you, forty years, some of you thirty, twenty, ten, three, one. He has done all this for you, has bled away his precious life, has died in agonies most exquisite upon the cross. What have you done for him? Turn over your diary now. Can you remember the contributions you have given out of your wealth, and what do they amount to? Add them up. Think of what you have done for him, how much of your time you have spent in his service. Add that up, turn over another leaf, and then observe how much time you have spent in praying for the progress of his kingdom. What have you done there? Add that up. I will do so for myself, and I can say without a boast I have labored to serve God, and have been in labors more abundant; but when I come to add all up and set what I have done side by side with what I owe to Christ, it is less than nothing and vanity, I pour contempt upon it all, it is but dust of vanity. and though from this day forward I should preach every hour in the day, though I could spend myself and be spent; though night should know no rest and day should never cease from toil, and year should succeed to year till this hair was hoary and this frame exhausted, when I come to render up my account he might

say, "Well done." but I should not feel it was so, but should rather say, "I am still an unprofitable servant; I have not done that which it was even my bare duty to do much less have I done all to show the love I owe." Now will you think what you have done dear brother and sister, and surely your account must fall short equally with mine.

But as for some of you, you have done positively nothing. You have joined the church and have been baptized, and that is about all, you have sometimes doled out a little from your abundance to the cause of Christ, but oh, how little when you think he gave his all for you! Others there are of you who out of your little have given much, out of your weakness have been strong, in your poverty you have never been poor towards Christ's cause; ye shall not lack your reward at last but even ye will come with the rest of us and say, "Lord help us to love the poor and by thy amazing love to us constrain us to devote ourselves wholly, unreservedly to thee."

Another argument let me give you, why you should serve Christ with all your might now. You believe, my dear hearers, that if men die unconverted their doom is fearful beyond all expression. You and I are compelled to believe from the testimony of the Spirit, that the punishment of those who die impenitent is beyond all that words can describe. They sink into a pit that is bottomless, into a fire that never can be quenched where they are fed on by a worm that dieth not. You know, and sometimes your hair has almost stood on end with the thought that the wrath to come is more than the soul can conceive. And is it possible, can it be possible with this belief in your mind that many of your fellow-creatures are going post-haste to this awful, this fearful hell, that you are idle and doing nothing? May God forgive you if such is your unfeeling state of heart—that you can contemplate a fellow-creature perishing in the fires of hell, and yet permit your hand to hang down in listless idleness. O children of the living God, I beseech you by the fires of hell, by the agony that knows of no abatement by the thirst that is not to be mitigated by a drop of water, by the eternity which knows no end; I beseech you by the wrath to come, be ye up and doing, earnestly striving together to be the means in God's hand of awakening poor souls and bringing them to the mercy of Christ. Be ye earnest. If ye do not believe this Bible, I care not what you are—earnest or dull. But if ye do believe it, act as ye believe; if ye think men are perishing, if the Lord's right hand is dashing in pieces his enemy, then I beseech you be strengthened by the same right hand, to endeavor to bring those enemies to Christ that they may be reconciled by the blood of the cross.

And, now last of all, let, me just appeal to you in this way. Possibly, in my explanation, I have led you to form in your heart some great scheme of what you would do. Let me knock that all to pieces, because that is not my text. It is not a great scheme, but it is, "*whatsoever* your hand findeth to do," that I want you to do. My dear friends, many of you are parents of children. It is quite certain, whatever else may be your duty, that your duty as parents is first. As their parents you owe them a duty; you have responsibilities towards them, and it is your duty to bring them up in the fear and nurture of God. May I earnestly beg and beseech of you, not to neglect this; for remember, you will soon be gone, and will not this be a thorn in your dying pillow, if, when your children stand around your bed to bid farewell to their dying father, or their dying mother, they shall have to say to you, "You are going from us, but we shall not miss you. We shall miss you as far as temporal things is concerned but when you are dead we shall be as well off in spiritual things as we were before, for you neglected us." They will not say so but do you suppose they will not think so, if such be the truth? Children are always quick. and if they say it not they would feel it. Will it not be far better, if God stroll so bless you, that when you lay sick and dying, there shall be a daughter wiping the hot sweat from your brow, and saying, "Fear not, mother, though you walk through the

valley of the shadow of death, "God is with you, and you need fear no evil?" Will it not be a satisfaction to you, father, when you die if glancing at the foot of the bed, you can say to your son, "Farewell, my son; I bless God that I leave you in this world to carry on the work which I have begun, for you are walking in your father's steps." I know of no greater joy than for some aged patriarch, and I know of one,—God bless him, he is preaching the word I doubt not this morning,—to be able to look to sons and daughters converted to Christ and then to look to another generation and see grandchildren converted to Christ. It must be a noble thing to die and leave behind three generations, and many of these already able to call the Redeemer blessed. O neglect not your present work I beseech you, or otherwise you shall lose the present blessing; and by neglecting this present duty which concerns your own household, you shall incur a household curse and make your death-bed uneasy, so that you shall toss there with those eyes looking on you, and silently charging you with having neglected their souls.

Sunday school teachers, I give you the same exhortation. I pray God that when you die it may not be said in your schools, "Well, we do not miss so-and-so at all; she was not a teacher we could desire, she filled up a gap, and that is all we can say." I hope it may be said of you, my brothers and sisters, in the holy work of Sunday—school teaching, "They are gone to their grave, and there is a vacancy made which will not soon be filled." But still your children shall gather round your coffin, and say, "God be blessed that we ever had such a teacher!" And though they are not converted, yet shall their little eyes weep when they think, "Teacher will never weep over us again. Teacher will never pray for us any more, teacher will never tell us of Christ again;" and that very thought may be more powerful in their minds than all you ever said to them, and may, perhaps, effect the work which was not accomplished when your soul left the body.

And now I charge myself most solemnly in his conclusion, to be more earnest than ever in preaching the Word to you,—to preach it in season and out of season to preach it with all my might, for I shall soon be gone. Life lasts not long, and when we have all departed may not others have to think of us, that we went before our work was fully accomplished? Once when George Whitfield was very sick and ill he was laid down by his friends by the fireside and he lay there as if he was dying. Presently he opened his eyes and a poor old negro woman, who had watched over him when others had given him up, spoke to him and said, "Massa George Whitfield are you still alive?" He looked and said, "Yes, I am; but I was in hopes I should have been in heaven." Then the old woman made this pretty speech. "Ah! Massa George," she said, "you went to the very gates of heaven, and Christ said, 'Go back, Massa George; there are many poor negroes down on the earth that I mean to have saved. Go back and tell them I love them, and mind you do not come back any more till you bring them all with you.'" So Whitfield recovered strength, and even found, as the old woman said, a desire not to go home till he could take these poor negroes with him. So may it be with us; may we live till we shall bring many souls home with us to glory, and then may it be said—

"Servant of Christ well done,
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle's fought. the victory's won,
Enter thy rest with joy."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

An Earnest Invitation

A Sermon

(No. 260)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 3rd, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”—Psalm 2:12.

IT WILL NOT BE NEEDFUL for me this morning to be controversial in my discourse; for but two Sabbaths ago I addressed you from that text, “The mighty God,” and endeavored with the utmost of my ability to prove that Christ must be “very God of very God,”—co-equal and co-eternal with his Father. Without, then, attempting to prove that, let us drive onward towards the practical issue; for, after all, practice is the end of preaching; or, if ye will have it, I will put it into Herbert’s words—

“Attend sermons, but prayers most,
Praying’s the end of preaching.”

And that too is in the text, for what lip can give the kiss of sincerity to the Son of God, save the lip of prayer. We drive onward, then, towards the practical conclusion May God the Holy Spirit assist us.

Now it has sometimes been disputed among most earnest and zealous ministers, which is the most likely means of bringing souls to Christ; whether it is the thunder of the threatening, or the still small whisper of the promise. I have heard some ministers who preferred the first; they have constantly dwelt upon the terrors of the law, and they have certainly, many of them, been eminently useful. they have had Scripture for their warrant Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. With “terrible things in righteousness” declaring the just anger and judgment of God against sin, they have alarmed those who were sitting at ease in a graceless state, and have thus been the means in the hands of God, of inducing them to flee from the wrath to come. Some, on the other hand, have rather decried the threatenings; and have dwelt almost entirely upon the promises. Like John their ministry has been full of love; they have constantly preached from such texts as this—“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,”—and such like, Now, these also have been eminently useful; and they too have had Scriptural warrant in abundance, for thus spake Christ’s apostles full often, and thus spake Jesus Christ himself, wooing with notes of mercy, and melting with tones of love those whom the law’s terrors would but have hardened in their sins. My text, however, seems to be a happy combination of the two, and I take it, that the most successful ministry will combine both means of bringing men to Christ. The text thunders with all the bolts of God—“Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” But it does not end in thunder, there comes a sweet soft, reviving shower after the storm; “Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

This morning I shall endeavor to use both arguments, and shall divide my text thus:—First, *the command*, “Kiss the Son” secondly, *the argument used*, “lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way;” and thirdly, *the benediction with which the text closes*—“Blessed are all they that put their trust in him;” this benediction being a second reason why we should obey the commandment.

I. First, then, THE COMMAND—“Kiss the Son.” This bears four interpretations. A kiss has divers meanings in it—progressive meanings. I pray that we may be led by grace from step to step, so that we may understand the command in all its fullness by putting it in practice.

1. In the first place, it is a kiss of *reconciliation*. The kiss is a token of enmity removed, of strife ended, and of peace established. You will remember that when Jacob met Esau, although the hearts of the brothers had been long estranged, and fear had dwelt in the breast of one, and revenge had kindled its fires in the heart of the other; when they met they were pacified towards each other and they fell upon each other’s neck, and they kissed: it was the kiss of reconciliation. Now, the very first work of grace in the heart is, for Christ to give the sinner the kiss of his affection, to prove his reconciliation to the sinner. Thus the father kissed his prodigal son when he returned. Before the feast was spread, before the music and the dance began, the father fell upon his son’s neck, and kissed him. On our part, however, it is our business to return that kiss; and as Jesus give’s the reconciling kiss on God’s behalf, it is ours to kiss the lip of Jesus, and to prove by that deed that we are “reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” Sinner, thou hast hitherto been an enemy of Christ’s gospel. Thou hast hated his Sabbaths; thou hast neglected his Word; thou hast abhorred his commandments and cast his laws behind thy back; thou hast, as much as lieth in thee, opposed his kingdom; thou hast loved the wages of sin, and the ways of iniquity better than the ways of Christ. What sayest thou? Does the Spirit now strive in thy heart? Then, I beseech thee, yield to his gracious influence, and now let thy quarrel be at an end. Cast down the weapons of thy rebellion; pull out the plumes of pride from thy helmet, and cast away the sword of thy rebellion. Be his enemy no longer; for, rest assured, he willst to be thy friend. With arms outstretched, ready to receive thee, with eyes full of tears, weeping over thine obstinacy, and with bowels moved with compassion for thee, he speaks through my lips this morning, and he says, “Rise the Son;” be reconciled. This is the very message of the gospel—“The ministry of reconciliation.” Thus speak we, as God hath commanded us. “We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” And is this a hard thing we ask of you, that you should be at friendship with him who is your best friend? Is this a rigorous law, like the commands of Pharaoh to the children of Israel in Egypt, when he bids you simply strike hands with him who shed his blood for sinners? We ask you not to be friends of death or hell; we beg you rather to dissolve your league with them; we pray that grace may lead you to forswear their company for ever, and be at peace with him who is incarnate love and infinite mercy. Sinners why will ye resist him who only longs to save you? Why scorn him who loves you? Why trample on the blood that bought you, and reject the cross which is the only hope of your salvation?” Kiss the Son.”

“Bow the knee, and kiss the Son,
Come and welcome, sinner, come.”

That is the first meaning of the text—the kiss of reconciliation. The Spirit of God must work a change in man’s heart before he will be willing to give this kiss, and it is my heart’s desire, that by the words which shall be uttered this morning, the Spirit may bow the obdurate heart, and lead you to give Christ the kiss of reconciliation this very day.

2. Again, the kiss of my text is a kiss of *allegiance and homage*. It is an Eastern custom for the subjects to kiss the feet of the king; nay, in some instances their homage is so abject that they kiss the dust beneath his feet, and the very steps of his throne. Now, Christ requires of every man who would be saved, that he shall yield to his government and his rule. There are some who are willing enough to be saved and take Christ to be their priest; but they are not willing to give up their sins, not willing to obey his precepts, to walk in his ordinances, and keep his commandments. Now, salvation cannot be cut in twain. If you would have justification you must have sanctification too. If your sins are pardoned they must be abhorred; if ye are washed in the blood to take away the guilt of sin, you must be washed in the water to take away the power of sin over your affections and life. Oh, sinners. the command is, "Kiss the Son," bow your knee, and come and own him to be a monarch, and say, "Other lords have had dominion over us; we have worshipped our lusts, our pleasures, our pride, our selfishness, but now will we submit ourselves to thine easy yoke. Take us and make us thine, for we are willing to be thy subjects—

"Oh, sovereign grace our hearts subdue;
We would be led in triumph too,
As willing captives to our Lord,
To sing the triumphs of his Word."

You must give him the kiss of fealty, of homage, and loyalty; and take him to be your king. And is this a hard thing? Is this a rigorous commandment? Why look at Englishmen, how they spring to their feet and sing with enthusiasm—

"God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen!"

And is it a hard thing for you and me to be bidden to cry, "God save King Jesus! Spread his kingdom! Let him reign, Ring of kings and Lord of lords I Let him reign in our hearts?" Is it a hard thing to bow before his gentle scepter? Is there any cruelty in the demand, that we should submit ourselves to the law of right, and rectitude, and justice, and love? "His ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths are peace." "His commandments are not grievous." "Come unto me," saith the Lord, "and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you;" it is not heavy; "take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." O sinner, leave that black monarch; turn your back upon the king of hell. May grace enable you now to flee away from him who deludes you to-day, and shall destroy you for ever; and come ye to the Prince Immanuel, the Son of God, and now declare yourselves to be the willing subjects of his blessed kingdom. "Kiss the Son." It is the kiss of reconciliation and the kiss of homage.

3. Again, it is the kiss of *worship*. They that worshipped Baal kissed the calves. It wee the custom in the east for idolaters to kiss the god which they foolishly adored. Now the commandment is that we should give to Christ divine worship. The Unitarian will not do this: he says, "Christ is but a mere man;" he will not kiss the eternal Son of God. Then let him know that God will not alter his gospel to suit his heresy. If he rebelliously denies the Godhead of Christ, he need not marvel if in the last day Christ shall say—"But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me," It is no marvel if he who rejects the Godhead of Christ should find that he has built his house upon the sand, and when the rain descends, and the flood comes, his hope shall totter, and great shall be the fall thereof. We are bidden to worship Christ, and O how pleasant is this command, to kiss him in adoration! It is the highest joy of the Christian

to worship Jesus. I know of no thrill of pleasure that can more rejoice the Christian's breast, and thrill his soul to music, than the song of—

“Worthy is he that once was slain,
The Prince of Peace that groan'd and died,
Worthy to rise, and live,
and reign let his Almighty Father's side.”

Surely that shall be the very song of heaven, to sing “Worthy the Lamb,” and yet again to shout louder still, “Worthy the Lamb! worthy the Lamb! “Well, sinner, thou art bidden to do this—to acknowledge Christ thy God. “Kiss the Son;” go to him in prayer this very day cast thyself on thy knees and worship him; confess thy sin committed against him; lay hold of his righteousness; touch the hem of his garment adore him by thy faith, trusting in him; adore him by thy service, living for him; adore him with thy lip, praising him; adore him with thy heart, loving him, and surrendering thy whole being to him. God help thee in this way to “kiss the Son.”

4. There is yet a fourth meaning, and I think this is the sweetest of all. “Kiss the Son.” Ah. Mary Magdalene, I need thee this morning! Come hither, Mary, thou shalt explain my text. There was a woman who had much forgiven and she loved much, and as a consequence, loving much she desired much the company and the presence of the object of her affection. She came to the Pharisee's house where he was feasting, but she was afraid to enter for she was a sinner; the Pharisee would repulse her, and tell her to go away. What did a harlot there in the house of a holy Pharisee? So she came to the door. as if she would peep in and just get a glimpse of him whom her soul loved. But there he lay upon the table, and happily for her, the Pharisee had slighted Christ, he had not put him at the head of the table, but at the end, and therefore his feet—laying backward as he declined—were close against the door. She came, and oh! she could not dare to look upon his head; she stood at his feet, behind him, weeping And as she wept, the tears flowed so plenteously that she washed his feet—which the Pharisee had forgotten to wash—with her tears. And then unbraiding her luxurious tresses, which had been the nets into which she had entangled her lovers, she began to wipe his feet with the hairs of her head. and stooping down she kissed his feet, and kissed them yet again. Poor sinner, thou that art full of guilt, if thou hast played the harlot, or if thou hast been a sinner in other ways, come, I beseech thee, to Jesus now. Look to him, believe in him,

“Trust in his blood, for it alone
Hath power sufficient to atone.”

And this done, come thou and “kiss the Son”—kiss his feet with lore. Oh, if he were here this morning, methinks I would kiss those feet again and again. And if any should enquire the reason, I would answer,

“Love I much? I've much forgiven,
I'm a miracle of grace.”

Jesus, dost thou permit me to kiss thy feet with the kisses of affection? And may I pray like the spouse in the Canticles: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine.” May I so pray? Then, glory be to thy name, I will not be slow in praying it. If I may be so highly favored I will not lose the favor through negligence and coldness of heart. Even now my soul gives the kiss of deep and sincere affection.

“Yes, I love thee and adore,
O for grace to love thee more.”

“Kiss the Son.” Do you see then the meaning of it? It is a kiss of reconciliation, a kiss of homage, a kiss of worship, and a kiss of affectionate gratitude. “Kiss the Son.”

And what if in this great assembly there should be some soul that saith, “I will not kiss the Son, I owe him nothing, I will not serve him, I will not be reconciled to him?” Ah! soul, there are tears for thee. Would God that all the people of Christ would weep for thee until thy heart were changed; for the terrible part of the text which we are to read belongs to thee, and ere long thou shalt know its fearful meaning. But may we not hope better things? Have we not somewhere in this great hall some poor trembling penitent, who with the tear in his eye is saying, “Kiss him and be reconciled to him!—Oh that I might My fear is, sir, if I should try to draw near to Christ, he would say, “Get thee gone, I will have nought to do with thee; thou art too vile, too hardened; thou hast too long resisted the Word, too long despised my grace—get thee gone.” No, soul, Jesus never said that yet, and he never will. Whatever are thy sins as long as thou art in the body there is hope. However great thy guilt, however enormous thy transgression, if thou art now willing to be reconciled, God has made thee willing, and he would not have put the will if he did not intend to gratify it. There is nothing that can keep thee from Christ if thou art willing to come. Christ casts out none that desire to be saved. There is in his heart enough for all that seek him, enough for each, enough for evermore. Oh! think not that Christ is ever slower than we are. We never love him before he loves us. If our heart loves him, his soul loved us long ago. and if we are now willing to be reconciled to him, let us rest assured that Jehovah’s melting bowels yearn to clasp his Ephraims to his breast. May God bless this exhortation to every heart now present, and to him be the glory.

II. This brings us to the second part of the text. “kiss the Son”—and THE ARGUMENT is “Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” read it—“Lest he be angry.” And can *he* be angry? Is he not the Lamb of God? Can a Lamb be angry? Did not he weep over sinners? Can *he* be angry? Did not he die for sinners—can he be angry. yes, and when he is angry, it is anger indeed When he is angry it is anger that none can match. The most awful word I times think in the whole Bible that shriek of the lost. “Rocks hide us! mountains, fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” What a fearful conjunction of terms—“the wrath of the Lamb?” Can you picture that dear face of his, those eyes that wept, those hands that bled, those lips that spoke quell notes of love, such words of pity and can you believe that one day those eyes shall know no tears. but shall flash with lightning, that those hands shall know no mercy, but shall grasp a rod of iron and break the wicked into pieces like potter’s vessels; and those feet shall know no errands of love, but he shall tread upon his enemies, and crush them, even as grapes are trodden by the wine-pressers, and the blood thereof shall stain his garments, and as he comes up from their destruction they shall ask him, “Who is this that cometh”—not from Calvary, not from Gethsemane, but “Who is this that cometh from Edom”—the land of his enemies—with dyed garments from Bozrah?”—the land of his stoutest foes—“this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?” And what shall be the answer? It is most terrible. Who is this that has trodden his enemies and crushed them?—“I that speak in righteousness, *mighty to save.*” Why, Jesus, if thou hadst said, “Mighty to destroy,” we might have understood thee; but “mighty to save!”—and so he is—this gives the edge to the whole sentence, that when he shall destroy his enemies, he that is mighty to save will be mighty to crush, mighty to damn, mighty to devour, and rend his prey in pieces. I know nothing, I repeat, more fearful than the thought that Christ will be angry, and that if we live and die finally impenitent, rejecting his mercy and despising his sacrifice we have good need to tremble at this

sentence, “Kiss the Son lest he be angry” And now do you see again that if Christ once be angry, it must be all over with our hopes or our rest? We will suppose now some poor girl who has stepped aside from the paths of right. She has persevered in her iniquity despite many warnings. Friends rise up to help her, but they drop off one by one, for she becomes incorrigibly wicked. Others come to help her, but as often as they rise they fall again, for she sins, and sins, and sins again. There is, however, one who has oftentimes received her to his bosom, erring though she be—her father. He says, “Shall I forget the child I have begotten? Sinner she is, but she is still my child,” and often as she sins and goes away he will not reject her; he receives her to his house again; tainted and defiled, again he gives her the kiss of fond affection. At last she perseveres in her iniquity, and goes to such a length, that one day in her desperate despair, some one says to her, why not seek a friend to deliver you in this your awful hour of distress and anguish on account of sin? “Oh,” says she, “I have none left.” “But there is your father. have you note father or a mother?” “Yes,” says she, “but he is angry, and he will do nothing for me.” Then her last door is shut, and her hope is over. What wonder that—

“Mad from life’s history,
Glad to death’s mystery,
Swift to be hurled—
Anywhere, anywhere,
Out of the world,”

she ends her life because her only helper is angry, and her hope is gone? Despair must seize her then, when her best, her only helper is angry with her. Let me give you another picture,—a simpler one. There is a dove long gone out of Noah’s ark: suppose that dove to have been flying many hours till its wing is weary Poor, poor dove! Across the shoreless sea it flies, and finds never a spot whereon its weary feet may rest. At last, it bethinks itself of the ark, it flies there, hoping there to find a shelter: but suppose it should see Noah standing looking through the window with crossbow to destroy it,—then where were its hope? Its only hope hath proved the gate of death. Now let it fold its wings and sink into the black stream, and die with all the rest. Ah! sinner, these two are but Saint pictures of the desperateness of your despair when once he is angry,—he who is the sinner’s friend, the sinner’s wooer, he of whom we sometimes say,—

“Jesus, lover of my soul.”

When he is angry, where, where, oh where can sinners hide? When he is angry, when he takes a bow and fits an arrow to the string, where is your shelter then?—where your defense and refuge? Sinners, “Kiss the Son,” bow before him now, and receive his grace; acknowledge his sway, lest he be angry with you, and for ever shut you up in black despair, for none can give you hope or joy when once he is angry.

And now mark the effects of Christ’s anger. “And ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” Let me give you a picture. Ye have seen the maid light the are. At first it is the match, the spark. and there is a little kindling; a kindling but a little. What is that compared with the fire that is to succeed? Ye have heard of the prairie burning. The traveler hath lie his fire and dropped a spark—the fire is kindling but a little, and a small circle of flame is forming. Ye cannot judge what will be the mighty catastrophe when the sheet of flame shall seem to cover half the continent. And yet, mark you, up your text says that “when God’s wrath is kindled but a little” it is even then enough to utterly destroy the wicked, so that they ” perish from the way ” What a fearful thought it presents to us if we have but eyes to see it! It is like one of Martin’s great pictures:

it has more cloud in it than plain outline; it has in it great masses of blackness; there is only this little kindling and there is the sinner destroyed. But what is that! Black thick darkness for ever. What must become of the sinner then when the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone shall blow up Tophet till its flames reach above all thought, and till the fire burns, beneath, even to the lowest hell? His wrath is kindled but a little then. I and, however, Calvin, together with several other excellent commentators, give another interpretation to this:—"In but a little," and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled very soon, or, "in but a little time." So it may be well translated without any violence whatever to the original. God's anger kindles very speedily when once men have rejected him: when the period of their mercy is passed away, then comes the hour of their black despair, and his wrath is kindled in a little time. This should make each one of us think about our souls—the fact that God may take us away with a stroke, and a great ransom cannot deliver us. We had, last Sabbath day a terrible picture of how soon God can take away a man with a stroke. On our common, you will remember, at Clapham, a man sought shelter beneath a poplar tree, and in a moment a bolt fell from heaven and rent his body in pieces, and he died. I should not have marveled if last night, when I was reading my text by the glare of the lightning, thinking is over amidst the roarings of the thunder, if many such deaths had occurred. God can soon take us away. But this is the wonder, that men will visit that tree by which their fellow died, and go away and be just as careless as they were before. You and I hear of sudden deaths, and yet we imagine we shall not die suddenly. We cannot think God's wrath will be kindled in a little time, and that he will take us away with a stroke. We get the idea that we shall die in our nests, with a slow and gradual death, and have abundance of time for preparation. Oh, I beseech you, let no such delusion destroy your soul. "Kiss the Son now, lest he be angry in a little while, and ye perish from the way." Now bow before him and receive his grace.

However I return to the old reading of the text, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." How terrible is the doom of the wicked! The little kindling of God's wrath kills them; what shall the eternal burnings be? Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall abide with everlasting burnings? There is a land of thick darkness and despair where dwelleth the undying worm, which in its ceaseless folds doth crush the spirits of the damned. There is a fire quick burning, that drieth up the very marrow of body and soul and yet destroyeth them not. There also is the pit that knoweth no bottom, the hopeless falling without a thought of ever coming to an end. There is a land where souls linger in eternal death, and yet they never die; crushed, but not annihilated; broken, but not destroyed; for ever, for ever, for ever, is the ceaseless wave which rolls its fresh tide of fire upon a shore of agony, whose years are as countless as the sands of the sea. And shall it be your lot and mine to dwell for ever with the howling spirits of the damned? Must these eyes weep the briny tear that cannot assuage thirst? Must these lips be parched with the infinite heat? Must this body be everlastingly tormented, and this soul, with all its powers, become a lake of grief into which torrents of Almighty wrath shall roll ceaselessly with black and fiery streams? Oh, my God, and can the thought be utter—there may be some in this hell this morning, who, ere long, shall be in hell? If you should see an arrow fitted to a string pointed in yon direction, would you think it a hard prophecy if I should say, that, ere long, the arrow would find its mark over yonder? "No," you would say, "it is but nature that it should go in the way in which it is directed." But, sinners, some of you are this day fitted on the bow of sin. Sin is the string that impels you forward. Nay, more than this. Some of you are whistling onward towards death, despair and hell. Sin is the path to hell, and you are traveling in it with

lightning speed. Why need you think me harsh if I prophecy that you will get to the end ere long and reap the harvest to your soul? Oh, "kiss the Son," I beseech you; for if ye kiss him not, if ye receive not his grace and mercy, perish ye must. there is no hope for you desperate, without remedy, your end must be, if ye will not yield your pride and submit to Jesus, Oh! what language shall I use? Here were a task for Desmosthenes, if he could rise from the dead, and be converted, and preach with all his mighty eloquence, and exhort you to flee from the wrath to come. Here is a text that might exhaust the eloquence of the apostle Paul, while with tears running down his cheeks he would plead with you to flee to Christ, and lay hold upon his mercy. As for me, I cannot speak my soul out. Would that my heart could speak without my lips to tell out the agony I feel just now concerning your souls. Oh, why will ye die? "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Will you make your beds in hell? Will you wrap yourselves about with flame for ever? Will you have the merriment of sin in this life, and then reap the harvest of destruction in the world to come? Oh, men and brethren, I beseech you by the living God, by death, by eternity, by heaven, and by hell; I implore you, stop! stop! and "kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way." Oh I the terrors of the Lord I who shall speak them? I Last night, we saw, as it were, the back parts of the terrible God, when his skirts of light swept through the sky. He made clouds his chariot, and he did ride upon the wings of the wind Sinners, can ye stand before the God of thunder? Can ye war against the God of lightning? Will ye resist him, and despise his Son, and reject the offer of mercy, and dash yourselves upon his spear, and rush upon his sword? Oh, turn ye! turn ye now! Thus saith the Lord: "Consider your ways."

"Bow the knee, and kiss the Son;

Come, and welcome, sinner, come!"

III. And now give me your attention just a moment or two longer while with all earnestness I endeavor to preach for a little while upon THE BENEDICTION WITH WHICH THE TEXT CLOSES "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." I have been beating the big drum of threatening, and now let us have the soft, sweet harp of David, of sweet, wooing benedictions. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." dost thou put thy trust in him, my hearer? Beneath the wings of God we nestle, and we know of no security elsewhere. This is enough for us. Now the test says, that those that trust in him are blessed; and I would observe, first, that they are *really* blessed. It is no fiction, no imaginary blessing; it is a real blessedness which belongs to those that trust in God: a blessedness that will stand the test of consideration, the test of life, and the trial of death; a blessedness into which we cannot plunge too deeply, for it is none of it a dream, but all a reality.

Again, those that trust in him have not only a real blessedness, but they oftentimes hate a *conscious* blessedness. They know what it is to be blest in their troubles, for they are in their trials comforted, and they are blest in their joys, for their joys are sanctified. They are blest and they know it, they sing about it and they rejoice in it. It is their joy to know that God's blessing is come to them Dot in word only but in very deed. They are blessed men and blessed women.

"They would not change their blest estate

For all the world calls good and great."

Then, further they are not only really blessed, and consciously blessed, but they are *increasingly* blessed. Their blessedness grows. They do not go downhill, as the wicked do, from bright hope to black despair. They do not diminish in their delights, the river deepens as they wade into it. They are blessed when the first ray of heavenly light streams on their eye-balls; they are blessed when

their eyes are opened wider still, to see more of the love of Christ; they are blessed the more their experience widens, and their knowledge deepens, and their love increases. They are blessed in the hour of death, and, best of all. their blessedness increases to eternal blessedness,—the perfection of the saints at the right hand of God. “Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” Time fails me to enter into this blessed benediction, and therefore I pause and come back to my old work again, of endeavoring to reach you by earnest entreaty, while I urge you to “kiss the Son.”

Sinner, you are bidin to trust in Christ this morning. Come, this is your *only* hope. Remember, you may do a hundred things, but you will be none the better. You will be like the woman mentioned in Scripture, who spent all her money on physicians, and was none the better, but, rather, grew worse. There is no hope or you but in Christ. Rest assured, that all the mercy of God is concentrated in the cross. I hear some talk about the uncovenanted mercies of God: there are no such things. The mercies of God are all emptied out into the covenant; God hath put all his grace into the person of Christ, and you shall have none elsewhere. Trust, then, in Christ,—so you shall be blessed, but you shall be blessed nowhere else. Again, I urge you to “kiss the Son,” and trust Christ, because this is the *sure* way. None have perished, trusting in Christ. It shall not be said on earth nor even in hell shall the blasphemy be uttered, that ever a soul perished that trusted in Christ. “But suppose I am not one of God’s elect,” says one. But if you trust in Christ you are; and there is no supposing about it. “But suppose Christ did not die for me.” But, if you trust him, he did die for you. That feet is proved, and you are saved. Cast yourself simply on him. dare it, run the risk of it; venture on him, venture on him, (and there is no risk). You shall not find that you have been mistaken. Sometimes I feel anxiety and doubt about my own salvation; and the only way I can get comfort is this: I go back to where I began, and say,—

“I the chief of sinners am;”

I go to my chamber, and once more confess that I am a wretch undone, without his sovereign grace, and I pray him to have mercy on me yet again Depend on it, it is the only way to heaven, and it is a sure one. If you perish trusting in Christ, you will be the first of the kind. Do you think God would allow any to say, “I trusted in Christ and yet he deceived me; I cast my soul on him, and he was not strong enough to bear to me?” Oh, do not be afraid, I beseech you.

And I conclude now by noticing that this is an *open* salvation. Every soul in the world that feels its need of a Saviour, and that longs to be saved, may come to Christ. It God hath convinced thee of sin, and brought thee to know thy need come, come away; come, come away! come now; trust now in Christ, and thou shalt now find that blessed are all they that trust in him. The door of mercy does not stand on the jar, it is wide open. The gates of heaven are not merely hanging on the latch, but they are wide open both night and day. Come, let us go together to that blessed house of mercy, and drive our wants away. The grace of Christ is like our street drinking fountains, open to every thirsty wanderer There is the cup, the cup of faith. Come and hold it here while the water freely flows and drink. There is no one can come up and say it is not made for you; for you can say, “Oh, yes it is, I am a thirsty soul; *it is meant for me.*” “Nay,” says the devil, “you are too wicked.” No, but this is a free-drinking fountain. It does not say over the top of the fountain, “No thieves to drink here.” All that is wanted at the drinking fountain, is simply that you should be willing to drink, that you should be thirsty and desire. Come, then,

“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,

Is to feel your need of him.”

He has given you this; come and drink; drink freely. “The Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and whosoever is athirst, let him come, and take the water of life freely.”

[On account of the great length of this sermon when delivered, Mr. Spurgeon has been compelled to abridge it in the printed form.]

The Call of Abraham

A Sermon

(No. 261)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 10th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”—Hebrews 11:8.

ABRAHAM'S FAITH was of the most eminent order, for he is called the Father of the Faithful. Let us rest assured that nothing but repeated and fiery trials could have trained his faith to so great a strength as that which it exhibited in his preparation to slay his son at the command of God. This true Jerusalem blade was long annealed before it gained its marvellous edge and matchless temper. Men come not to their perfect stature except by years of growth. Stars cannot reach the zenith of the heavens by one sudden flash, nay even the sun himself must climb to his meridian. Trials are the winds which root the tree of our faith. They are the trainers, drilling God's young soldiers, and teaching their hands to war and their fingers to fight. Foremost among Abraham's trials was that of being called away to a land which he had never been; as this may be our trial also, I pray that my words may be adapted to our present condition.

I. First, let us LOOK AT ABRAHAM. Abraham's family was originally an idolatrous one; afterwards some beams of light shone in upon the household, and they became worshippers of the true God; but there was much ignorance mingled with their worship, and at least occasionally their old idolatrous habits returned. The Lord who had always fixed on Abraham to be his chosen servant and the father of his chosen people upon earth, made Abraham leave the society of his friends and relatives, and go out of Ur of the Chaldees, and journey away to the land of Canaan, which he had promised afterwards to give him for an inheritance.

We shall notice first *what Abraham left*, and then where Abraham went; the trial is made up of these two things. What had he to leave? He had to leave behind him those who were exceeding dear to him. It is true that just after his first call, his own father, Terah, died, having gone a part of the way with Abraham and detained Abraham a little while by sickness. Abraham then went on his way obedient to the Lord's command. Nevertheless, he left behind him all the association of his youth, the house in which he had been trained, the family with which he had been nursed, all those whom he had known and with whom he had taken sweet counsel; and he must go forth into exile from the family of his love. He left behind him his native country, and to a patriot that is no small struggle—to leave all the associations of one's country, and bear with us one's native songs to be sung in distant valleys. Many a man has felt keenly enough the separation from home and kindred, and next to that, the sad banishment from his native land. Besides, we all know with what inconvenience Abraham must have removed. He had a considerable property in flocks and herds, and probably had the ancestral dwelling house in which to reside. He must leave all these, and he must also leave the fair pastures wherein his flocks and his father's flocks had been fed, and he must wend his way into the wilderness. He must give up all agricultural pursuits, renounce his vine and his fig tree, and go his way, he knew not whither, to a land which to him was as unknown as

the valley of the shadow of death. Whose of you who have had to part from those you loved, who have had your hearts rent when loved ones have been torn away, can sympathize somewhat with Abraham's trial when he left home and family, and country, and all, to go forth into an unknown land. This is the place from which he went.

How, let us turn to *the place to which he journeyed*. When men emigrate, they, wish to know the nature of the country in which they are to live. If it be a richer country than their own, although it be with some reluctance, they spread the sail and speed across the waters; and it may be, after they have settled there a little while, their mother country is almost forgotten, and they find a settled dwelling-place in their adopted land. But Abraham knew nothing of the country to which he was about to move; he had simply God's promise that it should be his inheritance. It was, it might be said, a wild goose chase, and the profane would deride it as a mad and idle dream. Doubtless, the prudent father cautioned him to avoid so great a risk, and the anxious mother bade him remember that, as a bird wandereth from his nest, so is he that leaveth his place. But amidst all this, Abraham was wiser than the wisest, for he put aside all worldly maxims, he set the precept above the maxim, and considered the promise more precious than the proverb. Well was it for Abraham that he knew that the wise things of men are often ignorance dressed out in its best clothes. It has been said by an acute old writer, that when Christ came into Jerusalem—and he was incarnate wisdom—he came riding upon an ass; but when Satan came into paradise—and he is infernal folly—he came in the shape of a wise creature, the subtle serpent. Wisdom came riding upon stupidity, and folly came in the garments of craftiness; We shall often find it so in our lives. Simplicities are next akin to revelations. Plain simple things, and especially a plain simple obedience, are next akin to the very wisdom of the seer; and he who knoweth how to read the precept need not be afraid that the prophecy will ever contradict it, or render obedience to the precept an act of folly. Abraham then went forth, he knew not whither. "The journey is a long one," say some timid ones. "It is so," said Abraham, "but God will help me on the way." "The end of your journey may be doleful," they say. "No," caith Abraham, "it cannot be doleful; it may be disappointing to my worldly ambition, but not to my faith. I believe that God will be with me, and that take me where he may, I shall lack no good thing." So Abraham went on his way along alone and weary journey, and God did not desert him, but graciously provided for him.

I have spoken to you of what Abraham left, and whither he went; now I would have you observe for a moment *how it was that Abraham went*. It is said that when he was commanded, he obeyed. Ere the precept had gone forth, obedience had come forth to meet it with rejoicing. God had scarcely spoken ere Abraham replied. Just as the thunder followeth the lightning's flash, instanter, when the storm is near, so when faith is near, the thunder of our obedience follows the mighty flash of God's influence in our hearts. If God bids us do, we should do at once. Abraham went without any hesitation. He did not say, "Lord give me a little time: I will go in a week. Suffer me first to go and bury my father." I do not find that he said, "Lord let me tarry till harvest be reaped." No, he was commanded to go, and he went without hesitation. There were no carnal arguments between God and Abraham, for God has not invited *his people* to reason with him with human arguments. He has invited *sinner*s to do it.—"Come now and let us reason together," he has said. When men have no faith, God invites them to reason, but when they have faith, reasoning with God becomes a sin. Abraham asked no question: he was not like Moses: he did not say, "Who am I that thou shouldest send me;" but when he was commanded to go, he went and he followed God *without hesitation*.

And then again, we have every reason to believe that he obeyed *without reluctance*. He went as cheerfully away from his father's house as he had ever gone into it. I know not that he was sent away with the voice of tabret and of harp, but I am sure there was the voice of music in his heart. He might have said, "I go as cheerfully to-day I know not where, as ever I have gone to the fat land of Egypt or the spice-bearing country of the Sabeans." Men said his journey was absurd and deplorable, but to him it was the happiest and the best, for God was with him; and if the star did not guide him as it did the wise men to Bethlehem, yet there was a star within his own soul that shone like a sun, and lightened his footsteps and cheered his spirit, and sent him on his joyous way towards his appointed habitation. He went cheerfully, not knowing whither he went, not starting and fretting like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, but running with willing footsteps in the way of God. The ancients pictured Mercury with wings upon its heels, and surely faith hath them there.

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

Love may be the wings, but the wings are upon the feet of faith, and it flies to do the will of God whilst hearkening to his commands.

But, then, notice that when Abraham started he *made no stipulations with his Lord*. If God had commanded Abraham to go to the utmost bounds of the green earth, to "rivers unknown to song," Abraham would have departed. If God had commanded him to ford the Atlantic, Abraham would have obeyed. His feet would have been willing to attempt a miracle, and the stormy billows would have been dry before his march. We may rest assured that when Abraham started, he asked no questions concerning how far or to what place he was journeying. He left that all in the hands of God. His faith put its hand inside the hand of its father, and he was content to be led wherever his father would lead him. Now, it is always foolish in us to be led by man, for then "the blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch;" but for the blind to be led by God is one of the best and wisest things. We sometimes put blinkers upon horses that they may not see too much, I fear we might wear such things ourselves to great advantage. In watching with the eyes of carnal reason for objections to God's precept and providence, it would be well if our eyes were burnt out, for better for us to enter into life having no eyes than having two eyes to follow our own devices and find our end destruction in hell fire. Abraham's faith, then, was a tried one. Add now I conclude this sketch of the Patriarch's call, by observing that Abraham's faith was well rewarded.

I think with all the trials of Abraham, you and I might even envy his position. That tent of his was a royal tent. Never did the curtains of Solomon himself enshroud more true royalty, or kingly nobility, than this poor tent in which Abraham sojourned. What a blessed man was he. His very dreams were blessed. The Lord was his shield and his exceeding great reward. A land was given to him, and was it a barren land? No. The Jews of old used to say that Canaan was the breast of the world; for there was always an abundance of milk and fatness. Other countries might have been the world's extremities, but this was the world's own breast, flowing with milk and honey. God gave him from the river of Egypt, even to the great river—the river Euphrates, and he looking from his starry height as an exalted patriarch, saw a race as numerous as the sand of the sea inhabiting the land. And he expects a mightier blessing yet. He looks for the day when the sons of Abraham shall at the second coming of Christ be assembled in their own land, and all the people shall walk in the light of Zion.

I think I have said enough about Abraham. Had my voice been strong enough, I could have enlarged, for it is a subject upon which much might be said extremely interesting to the spiritual mind.

II. But now I come to observe that YOU AND I MAY BE PLACED IN THE SAME POSITION. At their first conversion very many of the people of God are called to pass through the precise trial which Abraham endured. Some of us, it is true, were born of pious parents, and our conversion was a theme of joy to the home; it made jubilee; the fatted calf was killed, and there was music and dancing. But others were born as children of the Philistines; our parents were haters of God. I may be addressing such. No sooner did you begin to attend the house of God, than your father was the first to laugh at you, and when you were detected on your knees, mother, and brothers, and sisters, all assailed you with sneers and ridicule. It may be that you have suffered much household persecution for the sake of Christ's cross, and the profession of it you have made. Moreover, you may have been called to separate yourself from your whole ancestry; for in looking back you cannot detect on the family tree one branch that ever bore heavenly fruit. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. The whole family has been given up to Satan, and you have been called to bear a lonely protest to the gospel of Christ; you have come out, you have blighted your own worldly prospects, you have drowned your own interest in crossing the river. You have suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake, and perhaps at the time you may have been greatly staggered; nay, even now you may be passing through the fiery trial. You may be staggering in your soul, and saying, "Can this be right? shall I give up my religion, shall I put back into port, or shall I encounter these waves that threaten to submerge my vessel?" Dear brothers and sisters, if father and mother forsake you, then the Lord will take you up. "He that loveth father and mother, and house and lands, more than me," saith Christ, "is not worthy of me." You must leave all for Christ's sake. Be prepared. If they will come with you, take their compliance gladly; if they will not, then come alone; "Come ye out from among them; be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing." Be an Abraham. Leave everything, and if you do this in faith, verily ye shall not lack your reward. He is able, and he has promised to give you in this life ten times more than you lose for him, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Such Christians as I have referred to, who are not called in early life to endure this trial, frequently have to bear its counterpart at another stage in their journey. On a sudden their minds are enlightened with regard to the pure simplicity of the gospel; their family is professedly religious and they have been in the habit of attending a certain place of worship with their kindred and friends, till at length a change passes over their religious views. Perhaps it is a doctrinal change; they have imbibed the orthodox faith from the pure fountain of revelation itself, unalloyed by the traditions and qualifications of men; they have cast away all the heterodox glossary of man, and have determined to believe nothing but the sovereign grace of God. Perhaps their views on baptism may have changed, and seeing nothing in Scripture to warrant infant sprinkling, they have come out with a determination to practice believer's baptism. It may be that this entails the scoff and scorn of all who know them. This grieves the hearts of those who know and love Jesus, and the question arises with them, "What shall I do?" These matters may be non-essential, shall I keep them back? Shall I for charity's sake weaken my testimony. Shall I only bear testimony to points on which I may agree with other people, and hold my tongue about the rest. Oh, my dear friends, such carnal policy, if you practice it, will do you serious injury. Whatever you believe, carry it out. Depend upon it a grain of truth is a grain of diamond dust, and it is precious. There may be truths

non-essential to our *salvation*; but there are no non-essential truths with regard to our comfort. Every truth is essential. We must keep back none, but follow the Lord wholly; let this be your song,—

“Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes,
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose.”

The tendency of the present age is to temporize; we are asked continually to qualify our testimony; to cut off some portion of the truth we preach; to smooth down and polish our words. God forbid; we will not do so. Whatever we believe to be true, to the last jot and tittle we will speak it out. I hope so long as I live there will always be a straight road from my heart to my mouth, and that I shall be able to preach whatever I believe in my soul, and to keep nothing reserved. Do you the same. Though you should forsake all, and should be by all forsaken, for the truth's sake, with Abraham's trial and Abraham's faith, you shall have Abraham's honor and Abraham's reward.

How often has this temptation happened to the rich. When those who have moved in court circles, have suddenly become the subjects of the enlightening Spirit of grace, what opposition they have had to encounter! Many have been the noble ladies and gentlemen who have sat in this hall; yet, although I know many of them were impressed, how few of them have remained! Here and there one; they shine like the gleanings of the vintage.—Here and there one upon the topmost boughs. And what is the reason? Is it that their consciences are incapable of conviction? It is simply that the cares of this life, or the deceitfulness of riches chokes the Word, and by-and-bye they are offended. It is not likely that the simple worship of our unendowed meeting-houses is to win the palm of courtly applause; it is not likely that the name of Dissenter is to be held respectable; it is not likely that Calvinism is to become the court religion of England; it is not likely, at least at present, that a poor, simple, honest man's ministry, will be a ministry that courtiers regard; we never expected it. Nevertheless, there have been some, and God bless them, who have not been ashamed to come out, and leave behind them their former associates and take part with the despised people of God, scarcely knowing whither they went. Though they did know we were poor, and most of us uneducated and illiterate, they have taken their portion with us, and they have shown no signs of turning back but do even glory in that which some count to their shame. God bless them, and that abundantly.

Again, this trial of faith cometh oftentimes in matters of providence. We have been lining our nests very softly, and counting all the eggs that are laid therein, with the greatest cheerfulness and delight; we have had much goods laid up for many years, and all of a sudden, Misfortune, like a wicked boy, has climbed the tree, and pulled down the nests, and the birds had to fly, and we have said, “Whither shall we go?” But God has comforted us, and we have said in our hearts, “Every tree in the forest of earth is doomed to the axe, why, therefore, should we build our nest here? Let us fly away and find our home in the rock of ages.” And God has rewarded our faith. Our business, though suddenly blighted when flourishing in one place, has been, when removed amidst sad misgivings and dark uncertainties, even more flourishing in another; or if not, if trials have multiplied and poverty has succeeded wealth, yet grace has increased, and as our afflictions abounded, our consolations have much more abounded. I believe, dear friends, that many and many a time you, in your providential journey will have to go forth, not knowing whither you are going. But it is good for you; do not murmur at it. If the father of the faithful had to do it, why should the sons

murmur? The father of the family must not know whither he was going, and shall you, the sons and daughters, long to read the future with whistful curious eyes? No, wherever God in his providence guides you, let it be your joy to know that he is too wise to err—too good to be unkind.

And, beloved, this is what I feel at the present moment respecting the position of ourselves as a congregation. I was to this test by considering the way in which God led us, especially in reference to this place. It is now nearly three years since Exeter Hall was shut against us, for reasons which I have never considered to be fully justifiable. Then it was we went forth not knowing whither we went, and this place was prepared for us. It is more than probable that after two more Sabbaths have elapsed we must go forth again not knowing whither we shall go. But my faith is fixed upon him who has provided for us hitherto. This congregation cannot be scattered. God has gathered it, and we will go forth, being assured that a place shall be discovered in which we shall meet, and this shall work for the furtherance of the gospel, and for the glory of God. I feel that perhaps God has another host of sinners to be aroused and converted to Christ. We are getting old steady sort of folks here, and we have settled into a respectable concern. We may be turned into the streets, but, God going with us, we care not where we go. Wherever it is we shall be kept together; we are not men whose attachment has been formed hastily. We love each other. Like Abraham, and Lot and his family, we will journey together; we have no cause to fear. Do not, I entreat you, betray the slightest distress about it; if God has done it, he has wise purposes, let us submit in silence, and believe it must and shall be well. Abraham went forth “not knowing whither he went.” We will imitate him. While Abraham’s faith is our faith Abraham’s God is our God. He speaks and every doubt is hushed—“Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward.” So then we may boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

And I thought, while meditating upon this text, that the time must come to each of us, when, in a certain sense, we must go forth from this world, not knowing the place to which we are going. The hour is coming when you and I shall lie low upon our silent beds of languishing, and the message will come—“Arise and go forth from the house in which thou hast dwelt, from the city in which thou halt done business, from thy wife, from thy children, from thy bed, and from thy table. Arise and take thy last journey.” And what know I of the journey? A little have I read of it, and somewhat has been re-vested by the Spirit to my soul; but how little do we know of the realms of the future! We know there is a black and stormy river called “Death.” He bids me cross it. May he give me grace to go through the stream! And, after death, what cometh? No traveler hath returned to tell. Some say it is a land of confusion and of the shadow of death. Well, be it what it may, we will go forth, not knowing whither we go, but yet knowing that since he is with us, passing through the gloomy vale, we need fear no evil. We must be going to our Father’s house, be that where it may. We must be going to our heavenly Father’s kindly home, where Jesus is: to that royal city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. This shall be our last removal, to dwell for ever with him we love, to dwell in the bosom of God. We will take our last journey, and we will not fear to take it, for God is our refuge and strength, our helper in the hour of trouble and of death.

III. And now, my voice almost fails me, and therefore. I must come at once to the last point, which is that of EXHORTING YOU MOST CHEERFULLY TO FOLLOW THE GUIDE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND PRECEPT, LEAD IT WHEREVER IT MAY.

Let us follow the Shepherd, with a ready mind, because he has a perfect right to lead us wherever he pleases. We are not our own, we are bought with a price. If we were our own, Ye might repine

at our circumstances, but since we are not, let this be our cry, "Do what thou wilt, O Lord, and though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee;" we are not true to our profession of being Christians, if we pick and choose for ourselves. Picking and choosing are great enemies to submission. In fact, they are not at an consistent therewith. If we are really Christ's Christians, let us say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

And then in the next place we ought to submit because wherever he may lead us, if we know not where we go, we do know one thing, we know *with whom* we go, we do not know the road, but we do know the *guide*. We may feel that the journey is long, but we are quite sure that the everlasting arms that carry us are strong enough, be the journey never so many leagues in length. We do not know what may be the inhabitants of the land into which we may come, Canaanites or not; but we do know that the Lord our God is with us, and he shall surely deliver them into our hands.

Another reason why we should follow with simplicity and faith all the commands of God, is this, because we may be quite sure they shall all end well. They may not be well apparently while they are going on, but they will end well at last. You sometimes see in a factory the wheels running some this way, and some the other, and some crossways, and they seem to be playing all sorts of antics, but somehow or other the deviser brings them all to work for some settled object. And I know that come prosperity or come adversity, come sickness or come wealth, come foe, come friend, come popularity, or come contempt, his purpose shall be worked out, and that purpose shall be pure, unmingled good to every blood-bought heir of mercy on whom his heart is set.

And I may add, to conclude. Let us as a congregation, above all others, put the most implicit trust in our wonder-working God; when we recollect what he has already done for us, how he hath made the wrath of man to praise him, the contempt, the contumely, and the scorn has helped to bring to this place the willing thousands to hear the Word. The abuse of our enemies has been our best help, our grandest assistance; and in looking back day after day, and Sabbath after Sabbath. I can only hold up my hands and exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" And shall we doubt for the future? No; mariner, hoist the sail; loose the rudder bands; drag up the anchor; once again to sea we go, with the flag of faith at the masthead, with Jehovah at the helm, to a sure port the vessel shall be guided, though the storm may howl, and hell beneath shall be stirred; for God is with us, and the God of Abraham is our refuge. God give to every one of you the firmest trust in his providence, that you may go forth not knowing whither you go.

As for you that believe not in God, may you be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as in your Redeemer, and afterwards to trust your God, and leave al your concerns in his hands.

Distinguishing Grace

A Sermon

(No. 262)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, February 6th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another?”—1 Corinthians 4:7.

OR, AS IT IS in the Greek: “For who distinguisheth thee?” “Who giveth thee distinguishing and discriminating mercy?” “Who maketh thee to differ from another?” Pride is the inherent sin of man, and yet it is of all sins the most foolish. A thousand arguments might be used to show its absurdity; but none of these would be sufficient to quench its vitality. Alive it is in the heart, and there it will be, till we die to this world and rise again without spot or blemish. Yet many are the arrows which may be shot at the heart of our boasting. Take for instance the argument of creation; how strongly that thrusts at our pride. There is a vessel upon the potter’s wheel, would it not be preposterous for that clay which the potter fashioneth to boast itself and say, “How well am I fashioned! how beautifully am I proportioned; I deserve much praise!” Why, O lump of clay, whatever thou art, the potter made thee; however elegant thy proportions, however matchless thy symmetry, the glory is due to him that made thee, not to thyself; thou art but the work of his hands. And so let us speak unto ourselves. We are the thing formed; shall we say of ourselves that we deserve honor because God hath formed us excellently and wondrously? No, the fact of our creation should extinguish the sparks of our pride. What are we, after all, but as grasshoppers in his sight, as drops of the bucket, as lumps of animated dust; we are but the infants of a day when we are most old; we are but the insects of an hour when we are most strong; we are but the wild ass’s colt when we are most wise, we are but as folly and vanity when we are most excellent—let that tend to humble us. But surely if these prevail not to clip the pinions of our high soaring pride, the Christian man may at least bind its wings with arguments derived from the distinguishing love and peculiar mercies of God. “*Who maketh thee to differ from another?*”—This question should be like a dagger put to the throat of our boasting;—“and *what trust thou that thou didst not receive;*”—it would be like a sword thrust through the heart of our self-exaltation and pride.

We shall now for a moment or two endeavor to put down our pride by observing wherein God hath distinguished us and made us to differ, and then by noticing that all this cometh of him, and should be a reason for humiliation, and not for boasting.

1. Many of us differ from others in God’s providential dealings towards us. Let us think a moment how many there are of God’s precious and dearly beloved children, who at this moment are in the depths of poverty. They are not walking about in sheepskins and goatskins, persecuted, afflicted, and tormented; but still they are hungry, and no man gives them to eat; they are thirsty, and no man furnishes them with drink, their fires are wasted in poverty and their years in distress. Some there are of God’s children who were once in affluence but have been suddenly plunged into the lowest depths of penury; they knew what it was to be respected among the sons of men, but now they are among the dogs of the flock, and no man careth for them. There are some of us who are here present who have all that heart can wish: God hath given us food and raiment, the lines

have fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage. Let us gratefully ask—"Who maketh us to differ? "Let us recollect that all we have is the gift of his providence. Not to you, O my hands, do I sacrifice because ye have toiled for bread; not to you, O ye brains, will I offer incense, because ye have thought for my daily livelihood; not to you, O my lips, will I offer my adulation, because ye have been the means of furnishing me with words. No; unto God, who giveth power to get, and to have, and to enjoy; unto him be all the praise for what he hath done for us. Never let our songs cease, for his goodness is an ever flowing stream. Perhaps none of us can ever know, until the great day shall reveal it, how much some of God's servants are tried. To this day they have "perils by land, and perils by sea, and perils by false brethren;" to this hour they are pinched by want, they are deserted by friends, they know what despondency means, and all the ill which dejection and disappointment can bring to them; they have dived into the lowest depths of the sea of trouble, and have walked for many a league over the hot sand of the desert of affliction. And if God hath delivered us from these things, and hath made our path more pleasant, and hath led us beside the still waters, and into the green pastures,—if he hath distinguished us by the common gifts of his providence above many others of his children who are far better and far more holy than we, what shall we say? It is owing only to his grace towards us, and we will not exalt ourselves above our fellows, we will not be high-minded, but condescend to men of low estate; we will not lift our necks with the proud, but we will bow down our brows with the humble; every man shall be called our brother, not merely those who are arrayed in goodly raiment, but those who are clothed in the habiliments of toil, they shall be confessed to be our kindred, sprung from the same stock; for what have we that we have not received, and what maketh us to differ from another? I wish that some of the stiff-necked gentry of our churches would at times recollect this. Their condition is smooth as oil, and as soft as young down, but their hearts are as high as poplars, and their manners as stiff as hedge-stakes. There have been many who would do well if they would learn that they have nothing beyond what God has given them. And the more God has given them, the more they are in debt. Why should a man boast because he is deeper in debt than another? Do the debtors in the Queen's Bench say to one another, "You are only a hundred pounds in debt, and I a thousand, therefore I am a greater gentleman than you?" I think not. But, nevertheless, if they did so, they would be as wise as men who boast beyond their fellow-creatures because they happen to have more of rank, wealth, honor, and position, in this world. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

But the best way for you to feel this part of the discourse is, to go to-morrow into the hospital, and walk along the wards, and see how poor men's bodies suffer, and then go into the operating-room and see what flesh and blood may have to endure. Then when you have done, go round the neighborhood to see the sick who have lain for ten, or twelve, or fifteen years upon the same bed, and after that go and visit some of God's poverty-stricken children who just exist in this world, and it is but a bare existence, maintained on bread and butter and a little tea, and but too little of even such things as those. Go and see their poor, miserable, unfurnished rooms, their cellars and their attics, and that will be a better sermon to you than anything I can utter. You will come home and say, "Oh my God, I bless thee for thy kindness towards me. These temporal mercies which I once thought so little of, I must heartily blest thee for. I must thank thee for what thou hast given to me, and I will ascribe it all to thy love, for thou makest me to differ. I have nothing that I have not received."

2. But this is not the most important point for us to observe. We are now going to look at, not matters of providence, but the things of God's grace. Here it is that we who are now assembled as a church have most reason to bless God, and to say, "Who maketh us to differ from others?" Take, my dear friends, in your mind's eye the cases of the careless, the hardened, and the thoughtless, of even this present congregation. Side-by-side with you, my brother, there may sit a man, a woman, who is dead in trespasses and sins. To such the music of the gospel is like singing to a dead ear, and the dropping of the word is as dew upon a rock. There are many in this congregation whose position in society, and whose moral character are extremely excellent, and yet before God their state is awful. They attend the house of God as regularly as we do. They sing as we sing, sit as we sit, and come and go as we do, and yet are they without God and without hope in the world—strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens from the covenant of promise. Yet what maketh us to differ? Why is it that I this day am not sitting down a callous hearer, hardened under the gospel? Why am I not at this very hour hearing the Word with my outward ear but rejecting it in my inward heart? Why is it that I have not been suffered to reject the invitation of Christ to despise his grace—to go on, Sunday after Sunday, hearing the Word and yet being like the deaf adder to it. Oh, *have I made myself to differ?* God forbid that such a proud, blaspheming thought should defile our hearts. No, beloved;

“‘Twas the same love which spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.”

The only reason, my brother, why thou art at this time an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, a partaker of sweet fellowship with Jesus, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, is because HE hath made thee to differ. Thou wast an heir of wrath, even as others, born in sin and shapen in iniquity. Therefore must thou give all the glory to his holy name, and cry—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise." Even this one thought when fully masticated and digested might feed up our gratitude and make us humbly bow before the footstool of God's throne with joyful thanksgiving.

3. Will you please, however, to think of other cases? Who maketh thee to differ from others of this assembly who are more hardened than those to whom we have alluded? There are some men and women of whose salvation, if it were to be wrought by man, we must indeed utterly despair; for their hearts are harder than the most stubborn steel. The hammer of the Word makes no impression on such souls. The thunders of the law roll over their heads, but they can sleep in the midst of the tumult—the lightnings of Sinai flash against their hearts, but even those mighty flames seem as if they recoiled from the attack, Do you not know such? they are your own children, your husband, your wife, some of your own family, and as you look upon them, though you have longed, prayed, and wept, and sighed for their souls, you are compelled to say in your heart, "I half fear that I shall never see them converted." You say with sorrow, "Oh, if they are saved it will be a wonder of divine grace indeed. Surely they will never yield their souls to God. They seem as callous as if their conscience were seared with a hot iron; they appear to have the stamp of condemnation upon their brow, as if they were marked and sealed, and had the earnest of the pit upon their hearts before they came there. Ay, but stop—"Who maketh thee to differ?" Why am I not at this day among the most hardened of men? How is it that my heart is melted so that I can weep at the recollection of the Redeemer's suffering? Why is it that my conscience is tender, and that I am led to

self-examination by a searching sermon? How is it that I know how to pray and to groan before God on account of sin? What has brought the water from these eyes, but the selfsame power which brought the water from the rock? And what hath put life into my heart but the self-same Omnipotence which scattered manna in a hungry desert? Our hearts had still been like the wild beasts of the forest, if it had not been for Divine grace. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friend, every time you see a hardened sinner, just say within yourself, "There is the picture of what I should have been, what I must have been, if all-subduing, all-conquering love had not melted and sanctified my heart." Take these two cases then, and you have, heaven knows, reason enough to sing to the praise of sovereign grace.

4. But now another, the lowest class of sinners do not mingle with our congregations, but are to be seen in our back streets and lanes, and sometimes in our highways. How frightful is the sin of drunkenness, which degrades a man into a beast, which sinks him lower than the brutes themselves! How shameful is the iniquity of blasphemy, which without any object or any chance of profit brings a curse upon its own head! How awful are the ways of the lascivious wretch who ruins both body and soul at once, and not content with his own destruction ruins others with him. Cases that come under our observation in the daily newspapers, and that assail us in our daily observation and hearing are too vile to be told. How often is our blood chilled with the sound of an imprecation, and how frequently our heart is made to palpitate with the daring impieties of the blasphemous. Now let us stop; "Who maketh thee to differ?" Let us recollect that if we live very near to Christ, we should have lived quite as near to hell if it had not been for saving grace. Some of you here present are special witnesses of this grace, for you have yourself experienced redemption from these iniquities. Look back some four years with some of you and recollect how different were your surroundings then to what they are now. Mayhap four years ago you were in the tap-room singing the song of the drunkard as readily as any; but a little while ago you cursed that Saviour whom now you love. Only a few months have flitted over your head since you ran with the multitude to do evil; but now, "Who maketh thee to differ?" "Who hath brought this miracle of grace. Who has led you to the stool of the penitent and the table of communion, who hath done it? Beloved, you are not slow to answer, for the verdict of your heart is undivided; you do not give the glory in part to man and in part to God. No, you cry loudly in your hearts, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, and ye have been washed in the Redeemer's blood, and sanctified with the Spirit. Ye have been made to differ, and ye will confess it; ye have been made to differ by distinguishing grace, and distinguishing grace alone. And what upholds the rest of us from being what these my reclaimed brethren once were, and what they will become again unless saving grace keeps them? What preserves the preacher this day from being a lecturer to Infidels, dishonoring the grace of God which now he glories to magnify? What prevents the deacon from being an assistant in the courts of Satan? What forbids those who open the doors at the house of our God, and who serve him on the Sabbath-day, from being door-keepers in the tents of the sons of Belial? Why nothing; they had been there unless grace had prevented them. Grace hath done it, and nothing else. When we pass a prostitute in the street, we say, "O poor creature! I can pity you. I have not a harsh word for you, for I had been as you are had not God preserved me." And when you see the reeling drunkard, be not too hasty to condemn, recollect you had been as a beast before God unless the Lord had kept you, and when ye hear the oath and shudder at it, imagine not that you are superior in yourself to

the man who curses God, for perhaps you once cursed him too; and certainly you would have done had not the Holy Spirit sanctified you and implanted in you a hatred of that which the wicked so greedily follow. Have you seen a man hanged for murder? Have you seen another transported for the most infamous of crimes? If you hear of one who sins against society so foully that mankind excommunicate him, pause, and say, "Oh! but I should have gone as low as that, I should have been as black as he, unless restraining grace had kept me back in my unregeneracy, and unless constraining grace had pushed me forward in the heavenly race, ever since I have known the will of Jesus."

5. And now we will pause again, and think over another evil which stares us in the face in connection with every church. There are most melancholy cases of backsliding in so large a church as this. We are compelled often to discover the character of men and women who once seemed fair for heaven, but who manifested that they never had the root of the matter in them. Oh! well did the poet say,—

"When any turn from Zion's way,
Alas! what numbers do!"

No trial is greater to the true minister than the apostacy of his flock. All the rage of men is quite unable to bring tears to our eyes, but this has done it. Alas! when those whom I have loved have turned aside from the way of God, when those who have sat with us at the same table, and have joined with us in church communion, have gone out from us, and have brought dishonor upon the Church, and upon the name of Christ, there has been woe in my inmost spirit. Sometimes there are cases as glaring as they are painful, and as vile as they are grievous. Some of those, who were once in the midst of God's sanctuary, have become drunkards and whoremongers—and God in heaven only knows what. They have sinned against everything that is seemly, as well as everything that is holy. At the recollection of these our eyes are filled with tears. "Oh that our head were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of our people." No mischief-makers are so powerful as deserters. None cause so much agony as those who have nestled beneath our wings, and then have flown away to feed with carrion vultures on the putrid carcasses of lust and sin.

But now let us pause. How is it that the minister has not forsaken his profession, and gone back like a dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire? How is it that the deacons of this church have not turned aside unto crooked ways, and denied the faith, and become worse than infidels? How is it that so many members of this church have been kept so that the wicked one toucheth them not? O beloved! I can say for myself, I am a continual miracle of divine grace. If thou leave me, Lord, for a moment, I am utterly undone.

"Leave, O leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me"

Let Abraham be deserted by his God, he equivocates and denies his wife. Let Noah be deserted, he becomes a drunkard, and is naked to his shame. Let Lot be left awhile, and, filled with wine, he revels in incestuous embraces, and the fruit of his body becomes a testimony to his disgrace. Nay, let David, the man after God's own heart, be left, and Uriah's wife shall soon show the world that the man after God's own heart hath still an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Oh! well doth the poet put it—

"Methinks I hear the Saviour say,
Wilt thou forsake me too?"

And now let our conscience answer:—
 “Ah, Lord! with such a heart as mine,
 Unless thou hold me fast,
 I feel I must, I shall decline
 And prove like them at last.”

Oh be not rashly self-confident, Christian man. Be as confident as you can in your God, but be distrustful of yourself. Ye may yet become all that is vile and vicious, unless sovereign grace prevent and keep you to the end. But remember if you have been preserved, the crown of your keeping belongs to the Shepherd of Israel, and ye know who that is. For he hath said “I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” “Ye know who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before his presence with exceeding great joy.” Then give all glory to the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God your Saviour, who has kept you thus.

6. Allow me one more contrast; once again let your gratitude go with me since you and I have joined the church how many who were once our companions have been damned whilst we have been saved, how many who were no worse than we were by nature have sunk into the lowest pit of hell. Conceive their unutterable torments; imagine their inconceivable woes; depict before the eye of your fancy their indescribable agonies. Descend in spirit for a moment to the gates of fire; enter into the abode of despair where justice reigns supreme on her iron throne; pass by the dreary cell of those who are everlastingly damned. Behold the twisting of that worm that never dies, and the bleeding hearts that are crushed within its coils. Look ye at that flame unquenchable and behold the souls that are sweltering there in torments to us unknown, and look if ye can look, but ye cannot look, for your eyes would be stricken with blindness if ye could see their torments. Your hair should be blanched withbut a moment of that horrible exhibition. Ah! while you stand then and think on that region of death, despair, and damnation, recollect that you would have been there if it had not been for sovereign grace. You have a harp prepared for you in heaven, a crown laid up for you when you have finished your course. You have a mansion, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Oh, why is it you are not already a fiend; who is it that has given you a good hope through grace that you shall never come into that place of torment. Oh! tell it the wide world over. Tell it in time and in eternity, *free grace* hath done it. Free grace hath done it from the first to the last. I was a brand in the fire, but he plucked me from the burning, quenched me in his blood, and now he declares I shall be with him for ever in heaven. But oh! pause brethren and think that some of your former pot-companions, some of the companions of your revere and debaucheries are now in hell, and you are not there, and by the grace of God never will be there. Oh! why this, why this? Blessed be the Lord my God from this time forth and for ever. Praise ye his name. Grace has done it. Grace has done it all.

No, I never shall wear the chain, I ne'er shall be stretched upon that rack, nor feel that fire—
 “But I shall see his face,
 And never, never sin,
 But from the rivers of his grace
 Drink endless pleasures in.”

But I most confidently proclaim that the reason why I shall escape and shall be glorified, is not to be found in me, but in him. He hath made me to differ. I have nothing but what I have received.

Now what shall we say to these things. If God has made you to differ, the first prayer we should now utter should be, "Lord, humble us. Take away pride out of us. O God forgive us, that such beasts as we are should ever be proud." We might have been with our father the devil at this very hour, if it had not been for Divine love. And if we are now in the house of our Father which is in heaven shall we be proud? Avaunt thou monster! Go and dwell with the Pharisee. Pride agreeth well enough with the man who has in his own esteem been always virtuous. Go thou away and live with him who has had good works from the first day until now; but away from *me*.

"I the chief of sinners am,"

and saved by sovereign grace shall I be proud. It is not fit that thou shouldest live in my heart, thou monster! Begone! Begone! Find a fitter habitation than my soul. Should I be proud after such mercy, after such ill-deserving, but such God-receiving. Begone, pride! Begone!

Another lesson: if God alone hath made us to differ, why may he not make others to differ too? "After the Lord saved me," said one, "I never despaired of anybody;" and let us each say so too. If you were brought in why not another? Will you ever give up praying for anybody now that you are saved? I once heard one say concerning his child, "I think I must give her up, I can scarcely think she ever will be converted." Why you have been pardoned yourself; and if the Lord can do that, he can do anything. I am sure if the Lord has brought me to his feet there does not remain in the world a case that can ever equal mine; if he has brought me to receive his free grace, his sovereign love, his precious blood, and hath made me to love him, then there can be nothing too hard for him. O Lord, if thou hast melted this metal heart, and dissolved this stony soul, thou canst break anything. If thou hast broken the northern iron and the steel, then what remains beyond thy power? Go back then, Christian, armed with this fact, that God who hath made thee to differ can make anybody to differ. There can be no case beyond his strength; if he brought you in he can bring all in. If he doth but stretch out his hand, no man need despair. Therefore, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whither shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

Again, who hath made me to differ? Hath my Lord done it?—then let me serve him more than others. There was a question asked once by our Saviour, "What do ye more than others?" That question might well be put to each child of God here present. My dear friends, we must not be content with doing as much as other people do; in fact, we must never be contented with our doings at all, but always be trying to do more for him who hath done so much for us. Should I give my body to be burned, my flesh piecemeal to the knife, my nerves to the rack, and my heart to the spear, yet should I not give him all that he deserveth. No, if I should pass through the horrors of martyrdom, it were but a poor tribute to love so amazing, so divine. What are you doing my friends, what are you doing my brothers and sisters for Christ? But I will not name you, I censure myself if I censure you; but I will confess my own iniquities and leave you to confess yours. I do try to serve my Master, but I do not serve him as I would. Each act that I perform is marred, either by want of prayer for a blessing upon it, by want of faith in my Lord, or by pride in looking back upon it. I find too continually a tendency to serve myself instead of serving Christ, a constant longing rather to get through the work than to do it acceptably. And oh! when I think upon all, I must say I am an unprofitable servant. Have mercy O gracious Lord on my good works as well as on my bad ones, for my good works are but bad in the best and cannot be acceptable in themselves. I am certain some of you have a little more need to say that than I have. Let us cease boasting any more. I know there are some here who are not serving Christ; some members in this church are doing

nothing. You have not thought of doing anything for Christ, have you? You pay your regular subscriptions, you do what you are told to do, but do you give to Christ secretly? do you devote your substance unto him when no one knows it? do you spend your time for him? have you chosen a sphere, and have you said, "This is my work, and by the grace of God I will do it." Oh! ye cannot tell how much there is to do, and how few, there are to do it. I would I could have a church all alive, all active, so that there never could be a want but those who have would be ready to supply, and never a work but those who are qualified would be ready to fulfill. Never fear but we should find too many rather than too few to aid its accomplishment. Oh that we had the good spirit of the ancient church, the spirit to propagate our Christianity everywhere. There needs to be in many of the suburbs of London fresh gospel churches springing up. I can point to many places in my own vicinity, seven or eight, nine or ten in a row, where there is a chapel needed. In each place there are believers living, who do not think about uniting to establish a fresh cause; but as long as their peculiar wants are satisfied, by journeying a long way off perhaps, they forget the hundreds and thousands who are pressing around them. Oh! there is much to be done, and very little time to do it in. A very few weeks, and those of us who have been loved more than others, those of us who have thought we could wash Christ's feet with our tears, and wipe them with the hair of our heads, will have no more opportunities for spreading the name and fame of our glorious Redeemer. Let us give of our substance to his cause, give of our time to his service and have our hearts in his love, and so shall we be blessed, for in returning Christ's love we shall feel that his love is shed abroad more fully in our hearts and more fully in our understandings.

May the Holy Spirit add his blessing upon these broken words—they have been broken because they have broken my heart, and therefore I could not help their coming out in a broken way. God accept them; and dear brothers and sisters, may he bless them to you by helping you to love him more, who is my hope, my joy, my consolation, and my all.

The Story of God's Mighty Acts

A Sermon

(No. 263)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 17th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.”—Psalm 44:1.

PERHAPS there are no stories that stick by us so long as those which we hear in our childhood, those tales which are told us by our fathers, and in our nurseries. It is a sad reflection that too many of these stories are idle and vain, so that our minds in early infancy are tintured with fables, and inoculated with strange and lying narratives. Now, among the early Christians and the old believers in the far-off times, nursery tales were far different from what they are now, and the stories with which their children were amused were of a far different class from those which fascinated us in the days of our babyhood. No doubt, Abraham would talk to young children about the flood, and tell them how the waters overspread the earth, and how Noah alone was saved in the ark. The ancient Israelites, when they dwelt in their own land, would all of them tell their children about the Red Sea, and the plagues which God wrought in Egypt when he brought his people out of the house of bondage. Among the early Christians we know that it was the custom of parents to recount to their children everything concerning the life of Christ, the acts of the apostles, and the like interesting narratives. Nay, among our puritanic ancestors such were the stories that regaled their childhood. Sitting down by the fireside, before those old Dutch tiles with the quaint eccentric drawings upon them of the history of Christ, mothers would teach their children about Jesus walking on the water, or of his multiplying the loaves of bread, or of his marvellous transfiguration, or of the crucifixion of Jesus. Oh, how I would that the like were the tales of the present age, that the stories of our childhood would be again the stories of Christ, and that we would each of us believe that, after all, there can be nothing so interesting as that which is true, and nothing more striking than those stories which are written in sacred writ; nothing that can more truly move the heart of a child than the marvellous works of God which he did in the olden times. It seems that the psalmist who wrote this most musical ode had heard from his father, handed to him by tradition, the stories of the wondrous things which God had done in his day; and afterwards, this sweet singer in Israel taught it to his children, and so was one generation after another led to call God blessed, remembering his mighty acts.

Now, my dear friends, this morning I intend to recall to your minds some of the wondrous things which God has done in the olden time. My aim and object will be to excite your minds to seek after the like; that looking back upon what God has done, you may be induced to look forward with the eye of expectation, hoping that he will again stretch forth his potent hand and his holy arm, and repeat those mighty acts he performed in ancient days.

First, I shall speak of *the marvellous stories which our fathers have told us, and which we have heard of the olden time*; secondly, I shall mention *some disadvantages under which these old stories*

labour wit regard to the effect upon our minds; and, then, I shall draw the proper inferences from those marvellous things which we have heard, that the Lord did in the days of yore.

I. To begin then, with THE WONDERFUL STORIES WE HAVE HEARD OF THE LORD'S ANCIENT DOINGS.

We have heard that God has at times done very mighty acts. The plain everyday course of the world hath been disturbed with wonders at which men have been exceedingly amazed. God hath not always permitted his church to go on climbing by slow degrees to victory, but he hath been pleased at times to smite one terrible blow, and lay his enemies down upon the earth, and bid his children march over their prostrate bodies. Turn back then, to ancient records, and remember what God hath done. Will ye not remember what he did at the Red Sea, how he smote Egypt and all its chivalry, and covered Pharaoh's chariot and horse in the Red Sea? Have ye not heard tell how God smote Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, because they withstood the progress of his people? Have ye not learned how he proved that his mercy endureth for ever, when he slew those great kings and cast the mighty ones down from their thrones? Have you not read, too, how God smote the children of Canaan, and drove out the inhabitants thereof, and gave the land to his people, to be a possession by lot for ever? Have you not heard how when the hosts of Jabin came against them, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera? The river of Kishon swept them away, "that ancient river, the river Kishon," and there was none of them left? Hath it not been told you, too, how by the hand of David, God smote the Philistines, and how by his right hand he smote the children of Ammon? Have you not heard how Midian was put to confusion, and the myriads of Arabia were scattered by Asa in the day of his faith? And have you not heard, too, how the Lord sent a blast upon the hosts of Sennacherib, so that in the morning they were all dead men? Tell—tell ye these, his wonders! Speak of them in your streets. Teach them to your children. Let them not be forgotten, for the right hand of the Lord hath done marvellous things, his name is known in all the earth.

The wonders, however, which most concern us, are those of the Christian era; and surely these are not second to those under the Old Testament. Have you never read how God won to himself great renown on the day of Pentecost? Turn ye to this book of the record of the wonders of the Lord and read. Peter the fisherman stood up and preached in the name of the Lord his God. A multitude assembled and the Spirit of God fell upon them; and it came to pass that three thousand in one day were pricked in their heart by the hand of God, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And know you not how the twelve apostles with the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word, and the idols fell from their thrones? The cities opened wide their gates, and the messengers of Christ walked through the streets and preached. It is true that at first they were driven hither and thither, and hunted like partridges upon the mountains: but do ye not remember how the Lord did get unto himself a victory, so that in a hundred years after the nailing of Christ to the cross, the gospel had been preached in every nation, and the isles of the sea had heard the sound thereof? And have you forgotten how the heathen were baptized, thousands at a time, in every river? What stream is there in Europe that cannot testify to the majesty of the gospel? What city is there in the land that cannot tell how God's truth has triumphed, and how the heathen has forsaken his false god, and bowed his knee to Jesus the crucified? The first spread of the gospel is a miracle never to be eclipsed. Whatever god may have done at the Red Sea, he hath done still more within a hundred years after the time when Christ first came into the world. It seemed as if a fire from heaven ran along the

ground. Nothing could resist its force. The lightning shaft of truth shivered every pinnacle of the idol temple, and Jesus was worshipped from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

This is one of the things we have heard of the olden times.

And have ye never heard of the mighty things which God did by preachers some hundreds of years from that date? Hath it not been told you concerning Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, how, whenever he preached, the church was thronged with attentive hearers; and there, standing and lifting up holy hands, he spake with a majesty unparalleled, the word of God in truth and righteousness; the people listening, hanging forward to catch every word, and anon breaking the silence with the clapping of their hands and the stamping of their feet; then silent again for a while, spell-bound by the mighty orator; and again carried away with enthusiasm, springing to their feet, clapping their hands, and shouting for joy again? Numberless were the conversions in his day. God was exceedingly magnified, for sinners were abundantly saved. And have your fathers never told you of the wondrous things that were done afterwards when the black darkness of superstition covered the earth, when Popery sat upon her throne and stretched her iron rod across the nations and shut the windows of heaven, and quenched the very stars of God and made thick darkness cover the people? Have ye never heard how Martin Luther arose and preached the gospel of the grace of God, and how the nations trembled, and the world heard the voice of God and lived? Have you not heard of Zwingli among the Swiss, and of Calvin in the city of Geneva, and of the mighty works that God did by them? Nay, as Britons have ye forgotten the mighty preacher of the truth—have your ears ceased to tingle with the wondrous tale of the preachers that Wickliffe sent forth into every market town and every hamlet of England, preaching the gospel of God? Oh, doth not history tell us that these men were like fire-brands in the midst of the dry stubble; that their voice was as the roaring of a lion, and their going forth like the springing of a young lion. Their glory was as the firstling of a bullock; they did push the nation before them, and as for the enemies, they said, “Destroy them.” None could stand before them, for the Lord their God had girded them with might.

To come down a little nearer to our own times, truly our fathers have told us the wondrous things which God did in the days of Wesley and of Whitefield. The churches were all asleep. Irreligion was the rule of the day. The very streets seemed to run with iniquity, and the gutters were filled full with the iniquity of sin. Up rose Whitefield and Wesley, men whose hearts the Lord had touched, and they dared to preach the gospel of the grace of God. Suddenly, as in a moment, there was heard the rush as of wings, and the church said: “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” They come! they come! numberless as the birds of heaven, with a rushing like mighty winds that are not to be withstood. Within a few years, from the preaching of these two men, England was permeated with evangelical truth. The Word of God was known in every town, and there was scarcely a hamlet into which the Methodists had not penetrated. In those days of the slow-coach, when Christianity seemed to have bought up the old wagons in which our fathers once travelled—where business runs with steam, there oftentimes religion creeps along with its belly on the earth,—we are astonished at these tales, and we think them wonders. Yet let us believe them; they come to us as substantial matters of history. And the wondrous things which God did in the olden times, by his grace he will yet do again. He that is mighty hath done great things and holy is his name.

There is a special feature to which I would call your attention with regard to the works of God in the olden time; they derive increasing interest and wonder from the fact that they were all sudden things. The old stagers in our churches believe that things must grow, gently, by degrees; we must

go step by step onward. Concentrated action and continued labour, they say, will ultimately bring success. But the marvel is, all God's works have been sudden. When Peter stood up to preach, it did not take six weeks to convert the three thousand. They were converted at once and baptized that very day; they were that hour turned to God, and become as truly disciples of Christ as they could have been if their conversion had taken seventy years. So was it in the day of Martin Luther: it did not take Luther centuries to break through the thick darkness of Rome. God lit the candle and the candle burned, and there was the light in an instant—God works suddenly. If anyone could have stood in Wurtemberg, and have said: "Can Popery be made to quail, can the Vatican be made to shake?" The answer would have been:—"No; it will take at least a thousand years to do it. Popery, the great serpent, has so twisted itself about the nations, and bound them so fast in its coil, that they cannot be delivered except by a long process." "Not so," however, did God say. He smote the dragon sorely, and the nations went free; he cut the gates of brass, and broke in sunder the bars of iron, and the people were delivered in an hour. Freedom came not in the course of years, but in an instant. The people that walked in darkness saw a great light, and upon them that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, did the light shine. So was it in Whitefield's day. The rebuking of a slumbering church was not the work of ages; it was done at once. Have ye never heard of the great revival under Whitefield? Take as an instance that at Camslang. He was preaching in the church-yard to a great congregation, that could not get into any edifice; and while preaching, the power of God came upon the people, and one after another fell down as if they were smitten; and at least it was estimated that not less than three thousand persons were crying out at one time under the conviction of sin. He preached on, now thundering like Boanerges, and then comforting like Barnabas, and the work spread, and no tongue can tell the great things that God did under that one sermon of Whitefield. Not even the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost was equal to it.

So has it been in all revivals; God's work has been done suddenly. As with a clap of thunder has God descended from on high; not slowly, but on cherubim right royally doth he ride; on the wings of the mighty wind does he fly. Sudden has been the work; men could scarce believe it true, it was done in so short a space of time. Witness the great revival which is going on in and around Belfast. After carefully looking at the matter, and after seeing some trusty and well-beloved brother who lived in that neighborhood, I am convinced, notwithstanding what enemies may say, that it is a genuine work of grace, and that God is doing wonders there. A friend who called to see me yesterday, tells me that the lowest and vilest men, the most depraved females in Belfast, have been visited with this extraordinary epilepsy, as the world calls it; but with this strange rushing of the spirit, as we have it. Men who have been drunkards have suddenly felt an impulse compelling them to pray. They have resisted; they have sought to their cups in order to put it out; but when they have been swearing, seeking to quench the Spirit by their blasphemy, God has at last brought them on their knees, and they have been compelled to cry for mercy with piercing shrieks, and to agonize in prayer; and then after a time, the Evil one seems to have been cast out of them, and in a quiet, holy, happy frame of mind, they have made a profession of their faith in Christ, and have walked in his fear and love. Roman Catholics have been converted. I thought that an extraordinary thing; but they have been converted very frequently indeed in Ballymena and in Belfast. In fact, I am told the priests are now selling small bottles of holy water for people to take, in order that they may be preserved from this desperate contagion of the Holy Spirit. This holy water is said to have such efficacy, that those who do not attend any of the meetings are not likely to be meddled with by the Holy Spirit—so the priests tell them. But if they go to the meetings, even this holy water cannot

preserve them—they are as liable to fall prey to the Divine influence. I think they are just as likely to do so without as with it. All this has been brought about suddenly, and although we may expect to find some portion of *natural* excitement, yet I am persuaded it is in the main a real, *spiritual*, and abiding work. There is a little froth on the surface, but there is a deep running current that is not to be resisted, sweeping underneath, and carrying everything before it. At least there is something to awaken our interest, when we understand that in the small town of Ballymena on market day, the publicans have always taken one hundred pounds for whiskey, and now they cannot take a sovereign all day long in all the public houses. Men who were once drunkards now meet for prayer, and people after hearing one sermon will not go until the minister has preached another, and sometimes a third; and at last he is obliged to say: “You must go, I am exhausted.” Then they will break up into groups in their streets and in their houses, crying out to God to let this mighty work spread, that sinners may be converted unto him. “Well,” says one, “we cannot believe it.” Very likely you cannot, but some of us can, for we have heard it with our ears, and our fathers have told us the mighty works that God did in their days, and we are prepared to believe that God can do the same works now.

I must here remark again, in all these old stories there is one very plain feature. Whenever God has done a mighty work it has been by some very insignificant instrument. When he slew Goliath it was by little David, who was but a ruddy youth. Lay not up the sword of Goliath—I always thought that a mistake of David—lay up, not Goliath’s sword, but lay up the stone, and treasure up the sling in God’s armory for ever. When God would slay Sisera, it was a woman that must do it with a hammer and a nail. God has done his mightiest works by the meanest instruments: that is a fact most true of all God’s works—Peter the fisherman at Pentecost, Luther the humble monk at the Reformation, Whitefield the potboy of the Old Bell Inn at Gloucester in the time of the last century’s revival; and so it must be to the end. God works not by Pharaoh’s horses or chariot, but he works by Moses’ rod; he doth not his wonders with the whirlwind and the storm; he doth them by the still small voice, that the glory may be his and the honour all his own. Doth not this open a field of encouragement to you and to me? Why may not we be employed in doing some mighty work for God here? Moreover, we have noticed in all these stories of God’s mighty works in the olden time, that wherever he has done any great thing it has been by someone who has had very great faith. I do verily believe at this moment that, if God willed it, every soul in this hall would be converted now. If God chose to put forth the operations of his own mighty Spirit, not the most obdurate heart would be able to stand against it. “He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.” He will do as he pleases; none can stay his hand. “Well,” says one, “but I do not expect to see any great things.” Then, my dear friend, you will not be disappointed, for you will not see them; but those that expect them *shall* see them. Men of great faith do great things. It was Elijah’s faith that slew the priests of Baal. If he had the little heart that some of you have, Baal’s priests had still ruled over the people, and would never have been smitten with the sword. It was Elijah’s faith that bade him say: “If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him.” And again: “Choose one bullock for yourselves, cut it in pieces, lay it on wood and put no fire under, call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah.” It was his noble faith that bade him say: “Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape”; and he brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there—a holocaust to God. The reason why God’s name was so magnified, was because Elijah’s faith in God was so mighty and heroic. When the Pope sent his bull to Luther, Luther burned it. Standing up in the midst of the crowd with the blazing paper in

his hand he said: "See here, this is the Pope's bull." What cared he for all the Popes that were ever in or out of hell? And when he went to Worms to meet the grand Diet, his followers said: "You are in danger, stand back." "No," said Luther, "if there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would not fear; I will go"—and into Worms he went, confident in the Lord his God. It was the same with Whitefield; he believed and he expected that God would do great things. When he went into his pulpit he believed that God would bless the people, and God did do so. Little faith may do little things, but great faith shall be greatly honoured. O God! our fathers have told us this, that whenever they had great faith Thou hast always honoured it by doing mighty works.

I will detain you no longer on this point, except to make one observation. All the mighty works of God have been attended with great prayer, as well as with great faith. Have you ever heard of the commencement of the great American revival? A man unknown and obscure, laid it up in his heart to pray that God would bless his country. After praying and wrestling and making the soul-stirring enquiry: "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do? Lord, what wilt thou have me *to do*?" he hired a room, and put up an announcement that there would be a prayer-meeting held there at such-and-such an hour of the day. He went at the proper hour, and there was not a single person there; he began to pray, and prayed for half an hour alone. One came in at the end of the half-hour, and then two more, and I think he closed with six. The next week came around, and there might have been fifty dropped in at different times; at last the prayer-meeting grew to a hundred, then others began to start prayer-meetings; at last there was scarcely a street in New York that was without a prayer-meeting. Merchants found time to run in, in the middle of the day, to pray. The prayer-meetings became daily ones, lasting for about an hour; petitions and requests were sent up, these were simply asked and offered before God, and the answers came; and many were the happy hearts that stood up and testified that the prayer offered last week had been already fulfilled. Then it was when they were all earnest in prayer, suddenly the Spirit of God fell upon the people, and it was rumored that in a certain village a preacher had been preaching in thorough earnest, and there had been hundreds converted in a week. The matter spread into and through the Northern States—these revivals of religion became universal, and it has been sometimes said that a quarter of a million people were converted to God through the short space of two or three months. Now the same effect was produced in Ballymena and Belfast by the same means. The brother thought that it lay at his heart to pray, and he did pray; then he held a regular prayer-meeting; day after day they met together to entreat the blessing, and fire descended and the work was done. Sinners were converted, not by ones or twos but by hundreds and thousands, and the Lord's name was greatly magnified by the progress of his gospel. Beloved, I am only telling you facts. Make each of you your own estimate of them if you please.

II. Agreeable to my division, I have now to make a few observations upon THE DISADVANTAGES UNDER WHICH THESE OLD STORIES FREQUENTLY LABOUR. When people hear about what God used to do, one of the things they say is: "Oh, that was a very long while ago." They imagine that times have altered since then. Says one: "I can believe anything about the Reformation—the largest accounts that can possibly be given, I can take in." "And so could I concerning Whitefield and Wesley," says another, "all that is quite true, they did labour vigorously and successfully, but that was many years ago. Things were in a different state then from what they are now." Granted; but I want to know what the things have to do with it. I thought it was God that did it. Has God changed? Is he not an immutable God, the same yesterday, to-day

and for ever? Does not that furnish an argument to prove that what God has done at one time he can do at another? Nay, I think I may push it a little further, and say what he has done once, is a prophecy of what he intends to do again—that the mighty works which have been accomplished in the olden time shall all be repeated, and the Lord's song shall be sung again in Zion, and he shall again be greatly glorified. Others among you say, "Oh, well I look upon these things as great prodigies—miracles. We are not to expect them every day." That is the very reason why we do not get them. If we had learnt to expect them, we should no doubt obtain them, but we put them up on the shelf, as being out of the common order of our moderate religion, as being mere curiosities of Scripture history. We imagine such things, however true, to be prodigies of providence; we cannot imagine them to be according to the ordinary working of his mighty power. I beseech you, my friends, abjure that idea, put it out of your mind. Whatever God has done in the way of converting sinners is to be looked upon as a precedent, for "his arm is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that He cannot hear." If we are straitened at all, we are not straitened in ourselves, and with earnestness seek that God would restore to us the faith of the men of old, that we may richly enjoy his grace as in the days of old. Yet there is yet another disadvantage under which these old stories labour. The fact is, we have not seen them. Why, I may talk to you ever so long about revivals, but you won't believe them half so much, nor half so truly, as if one were to occur in your very midst. If you saw it with your own eyes, then you would see the power of it. If you had lived in Whitefield's day, or had heard Grimshaw preach, you would believe anything. Grimshaw would preach twenty-four times a week: he would preach many times in the course of a sultry day, going from place on horseback. That man *did* preach. It seemed as if heaven would come down to earth to listen to him. He spoke with a real earnestness, with all the fire of zeal that ever burned in mortal breast, and the people trembled while they listened to him, and said, "Certainly this is the voice of God." It was the same with Whitefield. The people would seem to move to and fro while he spoke, even as the harvest field is moved with the wind. So mighty was the energy of God that after hearing such a sermon the hardest-hearted men would go away and say: "There must be something in it, I never heard the like." Can you not realize these as literal facts? Do they stand up in all their brightness before your eyes? Then I think the stories you have heard with your ears should have a true and proper effect upon your lives.

III. This brings me in the third place to the PROPER INFERENCES THAT ARE TO BE DRAWN FROM THE OLD STORIES OF GOD'S MIGHTY DEEDS.

I would that I could speak with the fire of some of those men whose names I have mentioned. Pray for me, that the Spirit of God may rest upon me, that I may plead with you for a little time with all my might, seeking to exhort and stir you up, that you may get a like revival in your midst. My dear friends, the first effect which the reading of the history of God's mighty works should have upon us, is that of gratitude and praise. Have we nothing to sing about to-day?—then let us sing concerning days of yore. If we cannot sing to our well-beloved a song concerning what he is doing in our midst, let us, nevertheless, take down our harps from the willows, and sing an old song, and bless and praise his holy name for the things which he did to his ancient church, for the wonders which he wrought in Egypt, and in all the lands wherein he led his people, and from which he brought them out with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. When we have thus begun to praise God for what he has done, I think I may venture to impress upon you one other great duty. Let what God has done suggest to you the prayer that he would repeat the like signs and wonders among us. Oh! men and brethren, what would this heart feel if I could but believe that there were

some among you who would go home and pray for a revival of religion—men whose faith is large enough, and their love fiery enough to lead them from this moment to exercise unceasing intercessions that God would appear among us and do wondrous things here, as in the times of former generations. Why, look you here in this present assembly what objects there are for our compassion. Glancing round, I observe one and another whose history I may happen to know, but how many are there still unconverted—men who trembled and who know they have, but have shaken off their fears, and once more are daring their destiny, determined to be suicides to their own souls and to put away from them that grace which once seemed as if it were striving in their hearts. They are turning away from the gates of heaven, and running post-haste to the doors of hell; and will not you stretch out your hands to God to stop them in this desperate resolve? If in this congregation there were but one unconverted man and I could point him out and say: “There he sits, one soul that has never felt the love of God, and never has been moved to repentance,” with what anxious curiosity would every eye regard him? I think out of thousands of Christians here, there is not one who would refuse to go home and pray for that solitary unconverted individual. But, oh! my brethren, it is not one that is in danger of hell fire; here are hundreds and thousands of our fellow-creatures.

Shall I give you yet another reason why you should pray? Hitherto all other means have been used without effect. God is my witness how often I have striven in this pulpit to be the means of the conversion of men. I have preached my very heart out. I could say no more than I have said, and I hope the secrecy of my chamber is a witness to the fact that I do not cease to feel when I cease to speak; but I have a heart to pray for those of you who are never affected, or who, if affected, still quench the Spirit of God. I have done my utmost. Will not you come to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Will not your prayers accomplish that which my preaching fails to do? Here they are; I commend them to you. Men and women whose hearts refuse to melt, whose stubborn knees will not bend; I give them up to you and ask you to pray for them. Carry their cases on your knees before God. Wife! never cease to pray for your unconverted husband. Husband! never stop your supplication till you see your wife converted. And, O fathers and mothers! have you no unconverted children? have you not brought them here many and many a Sunday, and they remain just as they have been? You have sent them first to one chapel and then to another, and they are just what they were. The wrath of God abideth on them. Die they must; and should they die now, to a certainty you are aware that the flames of hell must engulf them. And do you refuse to pray for them? Hard hearts, brutish souls, if knowing Christ yourself ye will not pray for those who come of your own loins—your children according to the flesh.

Dear friends, we do not know what God may do for us if we do but pray for a blessing. Look at the movement we have already seen; we have witnessed Exeter Hall, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey, crammed to the doors, but we have seen no effect as yet of all these mighty gatherings. Have we not tried to preach without trying to pray? It is not likely that the church has been putting forth its preaching hand but not its praying hand? O dear friends! let us agonize in prayer, and it shall come to pass that this Music Hall shall witness the sighs and groans of the penitent and the songs of the converted. It shall yet happen that this vast host shall not come and go as now it does, but little the better; but men shall go out of this hall, praising God and saying:—“It was good to be there; it was none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven.” Thus much to stir you up to prayer.

Another inference we should draw is that all the stories we have heard should correct any self-dependence which may have crept into our treacherous hearts. Perhaps we as a congregation have begun to depend upon our numbers and so forth. We may have thought: "Surely God must bless us through the ministry." Now let the stories which our fathers have told us remind you, and remind me, that God saves not by many nor by few; that it is not in us to do this but God must do it all; it may be that some hidden preacher, whose name has never been known, will yet start up in this city of London and preach the Lord with greater power than bishops or ministers have ever know before. I will welcome him; God be with him; let him come from where he may; only let God speed him, and let the work be done. Mayhap, however, God intends to bless the agency used in this place for your good and for your conversion. If so, I am thrice happy to think such should be the case. But place no dependence upon the instrument. No, when men laughed at us and mocked us most, God blessed us most; and now it is not a disreputable thing to attend the Music Hall. We are not so much despised as we once were, but I question whether we have so great a blessing as once we had. We would be willing to endure another pelting in the pillory, to go through another ordeal with every newspaper against us, and with every man hissing and abusing us, if God so pleases, if he will but give us a blessing. Only let him cast out of us any idea that our own bow and sword will get us victory. We shall never get a revival here unless we believe that it is the Lord, and the Lord alone, that can do it.

Having made this statement, I will endeavour to stir you up with confidence that the result may be obtained that I have pictured, and that the stories we have heard of the olden time, may become true in our day. Why should not every one of my hearers be converted? Is there any limitation in the Spirit of God? Why should not the feeblest minister become the means of salvation to thousands? Is God's arm shortened? My brethren, when I bid you pray that God would make the ministry quick and powerful, like a two-edged sword, for the salvation of sinners, I am not setting you a hard, much less an impossible, task. We have but to ask and to get. Before we call, God will answer; and while we are yet speaking he will hear. God alone can know what may come of this morning's sermon, if he chooses to bless it. From this moment you may pray more; from this moment God may bless the ministry more. From this hour other pulpits may become more full of life and vigour than before. From this same moment the Word of God may flow, and run, and rush, and get to itself an amazing and boundless victory. Only wrestle in prayer, meet together in your houses, go to your closets, be instant, be earnest in season and out of season, agonize for souls, and all that you have heard shall be forgotten in what you shall see; and all that others have told you shall be as nothing compared with what you shall hear with your ears and behold with your eyes in your own midst. Oh ye, to whom all this is as an idle tale, who love not God,, neither serve him, I beseech you stop and think for a moment. Oh, Spirit of God, rest on thy servant while a few sentences are uttered, and make them mighty. God has striven with some of you. You have had your times of conviction. You are trying now, perhaps, to be infidels. You are trying to say now—"There is no hell—there is no hereafter." It will not do. You know there is a hell and all the laughter of those who seek to ruin your souls cannot make you believe that there is not. You sometimes try to think so, but you know that God is true. I do not argue with you now. Conscience tells you that God will punish you for sin. Depend upon it—you will find no happiness in trying to stifle God's Spirit. This is not the path to bliss, to quench those thoughts which would lead you to Christ. I beseech you, take off your hands from God's arm; resist not still His Spirit. Bow the knee and lay hold of Christ and believe on him. It will come to this yet. God the Holy Spirit will have you. I do trust that in answer to many

prayers he intends to save you yet. Give way now, but oh, remember if you are successful in quenching the Spirit, your success will be the most awful disaster that can ever occur to you, for if the Spirit forsake you, you are lost. It may be that this is the last warning you will ever have. The conviction you are now trying to put down and stifle may be the last you will have, and the angel standing with the black seal and the wax may be now about to drop it upon your destiny, and say, "Let him alone. He chooses drunkenness—he chooses lust—let him have them;; and let him reap the wages in the everlasting fires of hell." Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus: repent and be converted every one of you. I am bold to say what Peter did. Breaking through every bond of every kind that could bind my lip, I exhort you in God's name—Repent and escape from damnation. A few more months and years, and ye shall know what damnation means, except ye repent. Oh! fly to Christ while yet the lamp holds out and burns, and mercy is still preached to you. Grace is still presented; accept Christ, resist him no longer; come to him now. The gates of mercy are wide open too-day; come now, poor sinner, and have thy sins forgiven. When the old Romans used to attack a city, it was sometimes their custom to set up at the gate a white flag, and if the garrison surrendered while that white flag was there, their lives were spared. After that the black flag was put up, and then every man was put to the sword. The white flag is up to-day; perhaps to-morrow the black flag will be elevated upon the pole of the law; and then there is no repentance or salvation either in this world or in that which is to come. An old eastern conqueror when he came to a city used to light a brazier of coals, and, setting it high upon a pole he would, with sound of trumpet proclaim, that if they surrendered while the lamp held out and burned he would have mercy upon them, but that when the coals were out he would storm the city, pull it stone from stone, sow it with salt, and put men, women, and children, to a bloody death. To-day the thunders of God bid you to take the like warning. There is your light, the lamp, the brazier of hot coals. Year after year the fire is dying out, nevertheless there is coal left. Even now the wind of death is trying to blow out the last live coal. Oh! sinner, turn while the lamp continues to blaze. Turn now, for when the last coal is dead thy repentance cannot avail thee. Thy everlasting yelling in torment cannot move the heart of God; thy groans and briny tears cannot move him to pity thee. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. Oh, to-day lay hold on Christ, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

How Saints May Help the Devil

A Sermon

(No. 264)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 24th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.”—Ezekiel 16:54.

IT IS NOT a comfortable state to be at enmity with God, and the sinner knows this. Although he perseveres in his rebellion against the Most High, and turns not at the rebuke of the Almighty, but still goeth on in his iniquity, desperately seeking his own destruction, yet is he aware in his own conscience that he is not in a secure position. Hence it is that all wicked men are constantly on the look out for excuses. They find these either in pretended resolutions to reform at some future period, or else in the declaration that reformation is out of their power, and that, acting according to their own nature, they must continue to go on in their iniquities. When a man is willing to find an excuse for being God's enemy he need never be at a loss. He who hath to find a fact may find some difficulty; but he who would forge a lie may sit at his own fireside and do it. Now, the excuses of sinners are all of them false; they are refuges of lies; and therefore we need not wonder that they are exceedingly numerous, and very easy to come at.

One way in which sinners frequently excuse themselves is by endeavoring to get some apology for their own iniquities from the inconsistencies of God's people. This is the reason why there is much slander in the world. A true Christian is a rebuke to the sinner, wherever he goes he is a living protest against the evil of sin. Hence it is that the worldling makes a dead set upon a pious man. His language in his heart is, “He accuses me to my face; I cannot bear the sight of his holy character; it makes the blackness of my own life appear the more terrible, when I see the whiteness of his innocence contrasting with it.” And then the worldling opens all his eyes, and labors to find a fault with the virtuous. If, however, he fails to do so, he will next try to invent a fault; he will slander the man; and if even there he fails, and the man is like Job, “perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil;” then the sinner will, like the devil of old, begin to impute some wrong motive to the Christian's innocency. “Doth Job serve God for nought?” said the devil. He could find no fault with Job whatever, his character was untainted and unblemished; but, says he, “he keeps to his religion for what he gets by it.” I reckon it to be a glorious accusation when we are falsely charged with being religious for the sake of gain. It shows that our enemies have no other charge that they can bring against us. They have ransacked all the files of their calumny, and they can find nothing tangible, and this is the last they can bring—an imputation upon the motive of the man who has no other motive in all the world than to glorify his God and win sinners from destruction. In this, then, let us glory. If sinners slander us, it is because we make them uneasy. They see that our lives are a protest against them: and what can they do? They must somehow or other answer the Bill which we have filed against them in Heaven's Chancery, and they do it by issuing a Rejoinder against us, and bringing us in as defendants in the case. We glory in this, that we are defendants who can prove our innocence, and we are not ashamed to stand before the her

of God to have our motives tried. There is much I say to cheer us in the fact of such a libel. We know the work is done. We are sure our shots have told on their armor, when they are driven to return on us their calumnies and the venom of their wrath. Now we know that they feel the might of our arm, now we know we are not like them, mere drivellings and dwarfs. They have felt our might, and against it they kick, they foam, they forth their wrath. In this, I say, we glory. We have smitten them hard, or else they would not rise against us in this fashion.

Alas! alas! however, sinners have not always to use calumny and lies. It is too true that the church has given a real *bona fide* cause to the wicked for excusing themselves in their sin: the inconsistencies of professors, the want of heart in piety, the absence of devout earnestness, have given sad grounds to the ungodly to justify themselves in their sin. It is upon this melancholy subject that I am about to enter this morning; and may God grant unto all his people who shall feel convicted in their consciences, the spirit of mourning and contrition, that they may vex themselves before God, and confess this great iniquity that they have done, namely, that they have comforted sinners in their sin by their own inconsistency, and have justified the wicked in their rebellion by their own rebellings and revoltings.

This morning I shall deal thus with the subject. First, I shall point out the fact—*the different acts of Christians which have helped to comfort sinners in their sin*; and then, secondly, I shall observe the consequences of this evil—*how much the world at large has been injured by the deeds of professed followers of Christ*; and then I shall come with a solemn warning, bringing out the great battering ram, to dash against these refuges of lies and moreover crying with a loud voice to those who are the faithful servants of Christ, to withdraw their hands, and no longer to assist in keeping up the Jericho in which the wicked have entrenched themselves.

I. First, then, it shall be my sad and melancholy business this morning to show certain facts which it were dishonest to deny, namely, that **THE ACTS OF MANY OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF JUSTIFYING AND COMFORTINGS SINNERS IN THEIR EVIL WAYS.**

1. And first I would observe, that the daily inconsistencies of the people of God have much to do in this matter. By inconsistencies I do not exactly mean those grosser crimes into which, at sad and mournful periods, many professors fall; but I mean those frequent inconsistencies which become so common indeed that they are scarcely condemned by society.

The *covetousness* of too many Christians has had this offset. "Look," says the worldling, "this man professes that his inheritance is above, and that his affection is set not on things on earth, but on the things of heaven but look at him, he is just as earnest as I am about the things of this world; he can drive the screw home as tightly with his debtor as I can; he can scrape and cut with those that deal with him quite as keenly as ever I have done." Nay, beloved, this is not a mere tale; alas! I have seen persons held up to commendation as successful merchants, whose lives will not bear the test of Scripture, whose business transactions were as hard as griping, as grasping, as the transactions of the most worldly. How often has it happened that some of you have bent your knee in the sanctuary, and have said, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," and one hour afterwards your finger has been almost meeting your thumb through the jugular vein of some debtor whom you had seized by the throat! The church of Christ appears to be as worldly as the world itself, and professors of religion have become as sharp in trade and as ungenerous in their dealing as those that have never been baptised into the Lord Jesus, and have never professed to serve him. And now what does the world say? It throws this in our teeth. If it be accused of loving the things

of time and sense, it answers, "And so do you." If we tell the world that it has set its hopes upon a shadow, it replica, "But we have set our hope upon the self-same thing in which you are trusting; you are as worldly, as grasping, as covetous as we are; your protest has lost its force; you are no longer witnesses against us—we are accusers of you."

Another point in which the sinner often excuses himself is the manifest *worldliness* of many Christians. You will see Christian men and women as fond of dress, and as pleased with the frivolities of the age, as any other persons possibly could be, just as anxious to adorn their outward persons, so as to be seen of men; just as ambitious to win the praise which fools accord to fine dressing, as the most silly fop or the most gaudy among worldly women. What saith the world, when we turn round to it, and accuse it of being a mere butterfly, and finding all its pleasures in gaudy toys? "Oh! yes," it says, "we know your cant, but it is just the same with you." Do you not stand up and sing,

"Jewels to me are gaudy toys,
And gold but sordid dust?"

And yet you are just as fond of glittering as we are; your doctors of divinity pride themselves just as much in their D.D. as any of us in other titles. You are just as punctillious about terms of honor as any of us can be. You talk about carrying the cross; but we do not see it anywhere, except it be a golden cross sometimes hanging on your bosom. You say you are crucified to the world, and the world to you: it is a very merry sort of crucifixion. You say that you mortify your members and deny yourselves: your mortification must be suffered in secret, for it is but very little that we can see of it! Thus the worldling casts back to our challenge, declaring that we are not sincere, and thus he comforts himself a his sin, and justifies himself in his iniquity,

Look, too, at the manifest *pride* of many professors of religion. You see members of Christian churches as proud as they possibly can be. Their backs are as stiff as if an iron rod were in the center, they come up to the house of God, and it is a Christian doctrine that God has made of one flesh all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, but the Christian is as aristocratic as anybody else, just as proud and just as stiff. Is the Christian clothed in broad cloth? How often does he feel it a condescension to own a smock frock! and how often do you see a sister of Christ in satin, who thinks it something wonderful if she owns a fellow-member in an unwashable print. It is of no use denying it. I do not think that the evil is so common amongst us as it is in some churches; but this I know, that there are *respectable* churches and chapels in which a poor man scarcely dares to show his face. The pride of the church surely has become almost as great as the pride of Sodom of old. Her fullness of bread and her stiffness of neck hath brought her to exalt herself; and whereas it is the real glory of the church that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them," and that the poor have received the Word with gladness, it becomes now the honor of the church to talk of her respectability of the dignity and station of her members, and of the greatness of her wealth. What, then, do worldlings say? "You accuse us of pride, you are as proud as we are. You the humble followers of Jesus, who washed his saints' feet? Not you; no, you would have no objection, we doubt not to be washed by others, but we do not think it likely that you would ever wash ours. *You* the disciples of the fishermen of Galilee? Not you; you are too fine and great for that. Accuse us not of pride: why, you are as stiff-necked a generation, as we ourselves are."

Now, these are only mentioned amongst us as inconsistencies—not as sins. Sins they verily are; and they are such sins that they restrain the Spirit of God from blessing the church. Sins, too, they are that render the wicked callous in their sins, blunt the edge of our rebukes, and prevents the Word of God from working in the hearts of men.

I might mention another sad fact with regard to the church, which often stings us sorely,—the various *enmities*, and *strifes*, and *divisions*, that arise. You tell the worldly man that Christians love each other. “Ah!” says he, “you should go over to Ebenezer or to Rehoboth, and see how they love each other. Don’t talk of leading a cat and dog life! Look at many of your churches; see how the minister is treated, and how the deacons are in arms, and how the members hate one another. They can scarcely hold a church meeting without abusing each other!” How often is this proved to be true in many churches! And then the worldling says, “You tell us that we bite and devour each other, and that our wars and fightings come from our lusts. Where do your wars and fightings is come from? You tell us that our anger and wrath are the effect of sin that dwelleth in us: what causes your divisions and your strifes?” In this way, you see, the testimony of the children of God is rendered invalid, and we help to comfort sinners in their sins.

2. Now it is my mournful duty to go a step further. It is not merely these inconsistencies, but the glaring crimes of some professed disciples, thee have greatly assisted sinners in sheltering themselves from the attacks of the Word of God. Every now and then the cedar falls in the midst of the forest. Some one who stood prominent in the church of God, as a professed follower of Jesus, turns aside. “They go out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless, they would have continued with us, but they went out from us, that it might be manifest that they were not of us.” We have wept over high professors becoming drunkards; we have seen mighty men at religious public meetings becoming scoundrel bankrupts. We have had it dashed in our faces, dozens of times, that religion how often become a cloak for fraud, and that when the world has trusted a religious man with its wealth, that religious man has carried it off with him, and has not been found at the proper time. Oh! this is the great curse of the church. I was thinking only yesterday, with much sorrow in my heart, of the present age, and I could not but come to the conclusion, that all the burnings of Pagan tyrants, that all the tortures of Popish executioners, that all the bloody deaths to which God’s people were ever put, in any one age of the world, have never done so much hurt to the cause of Christ as the inconsistencies of professors of the present time. It was about three years ago I think, that failures among religious men seemed to be the order of the day, and our papers literally teemed with accusations against the church of God. O my brethren, let us not talk of these things, except with mourning and tears. Wrap thyself in sackcloth, O church of God; put away thy laughter, and cast ashes on thine head, for the crown of thy glory is departed, thy garments are stained, and the filthiness of thy skirts witnesses against thee. O church of Christ, thy Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, but now their visage is blacker than a coal, and their hands are defiled with iniquity. Remember thou the time of thy purity, when thy priests were glorious, and thy sons and daughters were clothed in royal apparel. How art thou fallen! how art thou cast down from the high mountains! Thy princes are clothed in rags; the veils are plucked from the face of thy daughters, and thou thyself art become disconsolate and a widow, by reason of the iniquity of thy sons and of thy daughters. Woe unto us, for thy glory is departed, thy sun is covered with thick darkness, and thy stars withhold their light. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned.

My hearers, my soul has carried me away; breathless and panting I return to my humbler but not less earnest style. Remember how vast your powers for mischief! Your ministers may preach as long as they will; but you undo their preaching if you are unholy. If you are inconsistent in your lives, Paul, Apollos, and Cephas might preach with power; but they have not half the power to

build up that you have to pull down. You are the mightiest workmen ye professors of religion; you can undo infinitely more than we can accomplish.

And now I pause, and relieve the shadow of this subject with something which, I fear, is in the sight of God equally vile. How often do the people of God comfort sinners in their sins by their murmurings and their complaints? Oh beloved, we are too much in the habit of covering our faces with sadness, on account of our temporal trials, and too little in the habit of weeping on account of the failings of the church of God! How frequently do you meet with a true Christian full of unbelieving cares! Ah! he says, "All these things are against me." He has food and raiment, but he is not content with it; he has more than that, but his store is a little diminished, and he is very cast down, and he has no faith, and cannot trust the Lord. "Oh!" says the worldling, "see these Christians; they talk about faith, but their faith is not of half so much service to them, as my desperation is to me that hardens my heart, and makes me stand up against affliction a great deal better than their faith in God's providence can do. Why, just look at these saints:—a drivelling set of crying creatures, they never have either peace or joy; they are everlastingly pulling long faces, and talking through their noses, about their sad trials and troubles; they never have an hour of happiness. Who would be a Christian? *I don't want to be converted,*" says the worldling. "Why should I pluck out the sunbeam from my eye, and take the smile from my brow? Why should I profess to follow a God whose servants only worship him by weeping, and never offer any sacrifice but that of groans, and sighs, and murmurs?" Might not a wicked man come in often, when Christians are grumbling together about the badness of the times, about the high price of commodities, and the low rate of wages, and so forth; and might he not say, "Yes, I can see your God treats you very badly; if I were you I'd strike, and have nothing to do with him?" And he would go away laughing, and saying, "Ah! Baal treats me better; I get more pleasure in this world than these Christian people do. Let them have their brave heaven to themselves, if they like; I'm not going snivelling through this world with them; let me have joy and rejoicing while I may." Don't you think that in this way you and I have done a world of damage to the cause of Christ, and may have helped to comfort sinners in their iniquities?

One other point, and I will have done with this. Perhaps the greatest evil has been done by the coldheartedness, and indifference of religious professors. I charge thee not, O church of God, with inconsistency; I lay no crime at thy door now; it is with another fault I charge thee—one as grievous these. I pray thee, plead guilty to it, for thou wilt but speak the truth, and then I pray God that this thy guilt may be cleansed, and that thou mayest offend him no longer with this thine evil. The church of God at the present age, is cold and lukewarm, and lifeless, compared with what it used to be. When I was preaching in Wales this week, I could not but observe the power which attended the ministry, when there was a living congregation and an earnest company gathered together to hear the Word of God. We have become accustomed to sit in a kind of solemn silence to hear the gospel. Not so in Wales. There is to be heard the voice of acclamation; every person expresses the feelings of his soul in audible prayers and cries to God; and at last, when the Spirit has descended, you hear the loud cries of "Gogoniant,"—"Glory to God." As each precious sentence drops from the lips of the preacher, it seems to be taken up and fed upon by the people, while they shout aloud for joy. I believe it is a great improvement on our English congregations, and some of our English preachers could not go on in their dull style, if sometimes the people had a chance of either hissing them or cheering them on. That, however, is but an index of the cold state of the churches. We are a phlegmatic, cold nation; even Scotch divines are more alive than we are, they speak the Word of

God with more earnestness than many of our ministers do in England. Cold as we think the north is, yet hath even it become warmer than we are. And now what says the world to all our coldness? Why, it says—"Ah, this is the kind of religion we like," says the worldling; "we don't like those raving Methodists; we can't stand them; we don't like those earnest indefatigable Christians of the cars of Whitfield; oh! no, they were a raving set of folks; we don't like them; but we like these quiet folks." "Yes," says the worldling, "I think it is quite right that every man should go to his church and his chapel on a Sunday; but I never could go and hear such raving as Mr. So-and-so gives." Of course you could not; you are an enemy to God, and that is why you like a Laodicean church. That very church which the world likes best is sure to be that which God abhors. The world says, "We like everything to go on smoothly; we like a man to go to his own parish church, and hear a good, solid, substantial sermon *read*; we like to go up to the meeting house, and hear a sober, eloquent divine; we don't like any of this furious preaching, any of these earnest exhortations." No, of course you like that of which God has said, "Thou art neither cold nor hot;" God hates such, and that is why sinners love it. But what effect does all this have upon the worldling? Why, just this. He says, "I like you, because you don't rebuke me; I like that kind of religion, because it is no accusation against me. When I see a Christian hot and in earnest about being saved," he says, "it rebukes my own indifference; but when I see a professed Christian just as indifferent about the salvation of men as I am, why, then I say, it is all a farce, nonsense! they don't mean it, the minister does not care a bit about whether souls are saved or not, and as for the church, they make a great, deaf of noise every now and then at Exeter Hall, about saving some poor blacks far away, but they don't care about saving us." And so a worldling wraps himself up, and goes on his way in his sin and his iniquity, and perseveres, even to the last declaring all the while that religion is but a sham, because he sees us careless in solemn matters, and cold concerning everlasting realities.

Thus I have, mournfully in my own soul, set forth the plan whereby Satan comforts sinners in their sins, even by means of those who ought most sternly to rebuke them.

II. And now for the second point—THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS EVIL. And here I wish to speak very pointedly and personally to all of you who are professors of religion, and I do hope that you will take every point to yourself, in which you must feel that you have been and are guilty.

Friends, how often have you and I, in the first place, helped to keep sinners easy in their sin, by our inconsistency! Had we been true Christians, the wicked man would often have been pricked to the heart, and his conscience would have convicted him; but having been unfaithful and untrue, he has been able to sleep on quietly, without any disturbance from us. Do you not think, my dear brothers and sisters, that you have each been guilty here?—that you have often helped to pacify the wicked in their rebellion against God? I must confess myself that I am guilty. I have labored to escape from the sin, but I am not clean delivered from it. I pray each one of you, make a full confession before God, if by your silence, when sin has been committed before your eyes, or by a smile, when a lascivious joke has been told in your hearing, or if by a constant indifference to the cause of Christ you have led sinners to sleep more securely in the bed of their iniquities.

But to go further still. Do you not think that very often, when a sinner's conscience has been roused, you and I have helped to give it a soporific draught by our coldness of heart, "Hush! Master Conscience," says the sinner, but he will not be still, but cries aloud, "Repent, repent." And then you, a professing Christian pass try, and you administer the laudanum draught of your indifference and the sinner's conscience falls back again into its slumber, and the reproof that might have been useful is entirely lost upon him. I am sure that this is one of the great crying sins of the church, that

we are not now the witnesses of God, as we should be, but often quiet the witness of conscience in the souls of men. Look now to your lives—I am speaking personally to each one—look at yesterday, and the days that went before, and I ask you, and I solemnly charge you to answer that question, Have you not often assisted, in the first place, to keep men's consciences quiet, and afterwards to send them to sleep when they have been aroused?

Further; is it not possible that often sinners have been strengthened in their sin by you? They were but beginning in iniquity, and had you rebuked with honesty and sincerity, by your own holy life, they might have been led to see their folly and might have ceased from sin; but you have strengthened their hands. They have gone forward confidently, because they have said, "See, a church member leads the way." "So-and-so is not more scrupulous than I," says such an one; "I may do what he does" And so you have helped to strengthen sinners in their sins.

Nay, is it not possible that some of you Christians have helped to confirm men in their sins and to destroy their souls? It is a master-piece of thy devil, when he can use Christ's own soldiers against Christ. But this he has often done. I have known many a case. Let me tell a story of a minister—one which I believe to be true and which convicts myself, and therefore I tell it with the hope that it may also waken your consciences and convict you too. There was a young minister once preaching very earnestly in a certain chapel, and he had to walk some four or five miles to his home along a country road after service. A young man, who had been deeply impressed under the sermon, requested the privilege of walking with the minister, with an earnest hope that he might get an opportunity of telling out his feelings to him, and obtaining some word of guidance or comfort. Instead of that, the young minister all the way along told the most singular tales to those who were with him, causing loud roars of laughter, and even relating tales which bordered upon the indecorous. He stopped at a certain house, and this young man with him, and the whole evening was spent in frivolity and foolish talking. Some years after, when the minister had grown old, he was sent for to the bedside of a dying man. He hastened thither with a heart desirous to do good. He was requested to sit down at the bedside and the dying man, looking at him, and regarding him most closely, said to him, "Do you remember preaching in such-and-such a village on such an occasion?" "I do," said the minister. "I was one of your hearers," said the man, "and I was deeply impressed by the sermon." "Thank God for that," said the minister. "Stop!" said the man, "don't thank God till you have heard the whole story; you will have reason to alter your tone before I have done." The minister changed countenance, but he little guessed what would be the full extent of that man's testimony. Said he, "Sir, do you remember, after you had finished that earnest sermon, I with some others walked home with you? I was sincerely desirous of being led in the right path that night; but I heard you speak in such a strain of levity, and with so much coarseness too, that I went outside the house, while you were sitting down to your evening meal; I stamped my foot upon the ground; I said that you were a liar, that Christianity was a falsehood, that it you could pretend to be so in earnest about it in the pulpit, and then come down and talk like that, the whole thing must be a sham; and I have been an infidel," said he, "a confirmed infidel, from that day to this. But I am not an infidel at this moment. I know better; I am dying, and I am about to be damned; and at the bar of God I will lay my damnation to your charge; my blood is one your head;"—and with a dreadful shriek, and one demoniacal glance at the trembling minister, he shut his eyes and died. Is it not possible that we may have been guilty thus? The bare idea would make the flesh creep on our bones; and yet I think there are few among us who must not say, "That has been my fault, after all." But are there not enough traps, in which to catch souls, without *your* being made Satan's fowlers to do mischief?

Hath not Satan legions enough of devils to murder men, without employing you? Are there no hands that may be red with the blood of souls beside yours? O followers of Christ! O believers in Jesus! Will ye serve under the black prince? Will ye fight against your Master? Will ye drag sinners down to hell? Shall *we*—(I take myself in here, more truly than any of you)—shall *we*, who profess to preach the gospel of Christ, by our conversation injure and destroy men's souls?

III. Thus I think I have expounded the solemn consequences of this fearful evil. And now I come, in conclusion, and I pray God to help me, while I deal earnestly, and solemnly with you, **AND BRING OUT THIS GREAT BATTERING RAM, TO BEAR AGAINST THIS VAIN EXCCUSE OF THE WICKED.**

Among this great congregation, I have doubtless a very large number of persons who are not converted to God, and who have continually made this their excuse, "I see so much of the inconsistency of professors that I do not intend to think about religion myself." My hearer, I conjure thee by the living God, give me thine ear a moment, while I pull this vain excuse of thine to pieces. What hast thou to do with the inconsistencies of another? "To his own master he shall stand or fall." What will it better thee, if one half of all the professors of religions be sent to hell? What comfort will that be to thee, when thou shalt come there thyself? Man, will God require the sins of other people at thine hands? Where is it said that God will punish thee for what another does? Or dost thou imagine that God will reward thee because another is guilty? Thou art surely not foolish enough for that. I ask thee, what canst thou have to do with another's servant? That man is a servant of God, or at least professes to be; if he be not so, what business can it possibly be of thine? If thou shouldst see twenty men drinking poison, would that be a reason why thou shouldst drink it? If, passing over London Bridge, thou shouldst see a dozen miserable creatures leaping off the parapet, there would be a good argument why thou thyself shouldst seek to stop them, but no argument why thou shouldst leap too. What if there be hundreds of suicides? will that excuse thee, if thou shalt shed thine own blood? Do men plead thus in courts of law? Does a man say, "O Judge, excuse me for having been a thief, there are so many hundreds of men that profess to be honest that are as big thieves as I?" Thou wilt be punished for thine own offenses, remember not for the offenses of another. Man! I conjure thee, look this in the face. How can this help to assuage thy misery? How can this help to make thee happier in hell, because thou sayest there are so many hypocrites in this world?

But, besides, thou knowest well enough that the church is not so bad as thou sayest it is. Thou seest some that are inconsistent; but are there not many that are holy? Dost thou dare to say there are none? I tell thee, man, thou art a fool. There are many bad coins in the world, many counterfeits; do you, therefore, say there are no good ones? If you say so, you are mad; for the very fact that there are counterfeits is a proof that there must be realities. Would any man think it worth his while to make bad sovereigns if there were no good ones? It is just the quantity of good ones that passes off the few false coins. And so no man would pretend to be a Christian unless there were some good Christians. There would be no hypocrites if there were not some true men. It is the quantity of true, men that helps to pass off the hypocrite in the crowd.

And then again, I say, when thou comest before the bar of God, dost thou think that this will serve thee as an excuse, to begin to find fault with God's own children? Suppose you were brought before a king, an absolute monarch, and you should begin to say, by way of appeal, "O king, I have been guilty, it is true, but your own sons and daughters I do not like; there are a great many faults in the princes of the blood." Would he not say, "Wretch! thou art adding insult to wickedness; thou

art guilty thyself, and now thou dost malign mine own children, the princes of the blood?" The Lord will not have thee say that at last. He has pardoned his children; he is ready to pardon thee. He sends mercy to thee this day, but if thou reject it, imagine not that thou shalt escape by recounting the sins of the pardoned ones. The rather this shall be an addition to thy sin, and thou shalt perish the more fearfully.

But come, man, once again: I would entreat of thee with all my might. What! canst thou be so foolish as to imagine, that because another man is destroying his own soul by hypocrisy, that this is a reason why thou shouldst destroy thine by indifference? If there be thousands of untrue Christians, so much the more reason why I should be a true one: if there are hundreds of hypocrites, this should make me more earnest to search myself, and should not make me indifferent about the matter. O sinner! thou wilt soon be on thy dying bed, and will it comfort thee there to think, "I have rejected Christ, I have despised salvation, I am perishing in my sins," and to add, "But there are many Christians who are hypocrites!" No, death will tear away that excuse. That will not serve you. And when the heavens are in a blaze, when the pillars of the earth shall reel, when God shall come on flying clouds to judge the children of men, when the eternal eyes are fixed upon you, and like burning lamps are enlightning the secret parts of your belly, will you then be able to make this an excuse—"Good God! it is true, I have damned myself, it is true, I have wilfully transgressed; but there were many hypocrites?" Then shall the Judge say, "What hast thou to do with that? Thou hadst nought to do, to interfere with my kingdom and with my judgship; for thine own offenses thou art lost; for thine own rejection of Christ thou shalt perish everlastingly."

And now I conclude, by addressing the people of God with equal solemnity and earnestness.

My dear hearers, if I could weep tears of blood this morning, I could not show too much emotion concerning this most solemn point. I do not know that this text ever struck me before yesterday, but I no sooner noticed it than it came home to me as an accusation. I plead guilty to it, and I pray for forgiveness. I only wish that a like power may attend it to you, that you may feel that you have been guilty too. O friends, can you bear the thought that you may have helped to drag others down to hell? Christ has loved you and pardoned your sins; and will you push others downward? And yet if you are inconsistent, and especially if you are cold and lukewarm in your religion, you are doing it. "Well," says one, "I don't do much good, but I do no hurt." That is an impossibility. You must be either doing good or evil. There is no borderland between truth and sin; a man must be either on land or in the water; and you are either serving God or serving Satan; each day you are increasing your Master's kingdom, or else diminishing it. I cannot bear the thought that any of you should be employed in Satan's camp. Suppose there ever should be an invasion of this country by France. The tocsin rings from every church steeple, the drum is sounding in every street, and men are gathering at every market-cross. Peaceful men spring up to soldiers in an instant; and multitudes are marching away to the coast. When we come near it we behold a troop of soldiers who have climbed our white cliffs, and with bayonets fixed they are marching against us. We, with a tremendous cheer, rush on against them, to drive them back into the sea which girds our beloved country. Suddenly, as we rush forward, we detect scores of Englishmen marching in the same ranks with our foes, and seeking to ravage their own country. What should we say? Seize these traitors; let not one of *them* escape; put *them* all to death. Can Englishmen take the side of England's enemies? Can they march against our hearths and homes, betray their fatherland, and take the side of the tyrant Emperor? Can this be? Then let them die the death!" And yet this day I behold a more mournful spectacle yet. There is King Jesus marching at the head of his troops; and can it be that

some of you, who profess to be his followers, are on the other side; that professing to be Christ's you are lighting in the ranks of the enemy—carrying the baggage of Satan and wearing the uniform of hell, when you profess to be soldiers of Christ? I know there are such here: God forgive them! God spare them; and may the deserters yet come back, even though they come back in the chains of conviction! May they come back and be saved! O brethren and sisters, there are enough to destroy souls without us—enough to extend the kingdom of Satan without our helping him. “Come out from among them; touch not the unclean thing; be ye separate.” Church of God! awake, awake, awake to the salvation of men! Sleep no longer, begin to pray, to wrestle, to travail in birth; be more holy, more consistent, more strict, more solemn in thy deportment! Begin, O soldiers of Christ, to be more true to your colors, and as surely as the time shall come when the church shall thus be reformed and revived, to surely shall the King come into our midst, and we shall march on to certain victory, trampling down our enemies, and getting to our King many crowns, through many victories achieved.

The Meek and Lowly One

A Sermon

(No. 265)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, July 31st, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matthew 11:28-30.

THE single sentence which I have selected for my text consists of these words:—“I am meek and lowly in heart.” These words might be taken to have three distinct bearings upon the context. They may be regarded as being *the lesson to be taught*: “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” One great lesson of the gospel is to teach us to be meek—to put away our high and angry spirits, and to make us lowly in heart. Peradventure, this is the meaning of the passage—that it we will but come to Christ’s school, he will teach us the hardest of all lessons,—how to be meek and lowly in heart. Again; other expositors might consider this sentence to signify, that is *the only Spirit in which a man can learn of Jesus*,— the Spirit which is necessary if we would become Christ’s scholars. We can learn nothing, even of Christ himself, while we hold our heads up with pride, or exalt ourselves with self-confidence. We must be meek and lowly in heart, otherwise we are totally unfit to be taught by Christ. Empty vessels may be filled; but vessels that are full already can receive no more. The man who knows his own emptiness can receive abundance of knowledge, and wisdom, and grace, from Christ; but he who glories in himself is not in a fit condition to receive anything from God. I have no doubt that both of these interpretations are true, and might be borne out by the connection. It is the *lesson of Christ’s school*—it is the *spirit of Christ’s disciples*. But I choose, rather, this morning, to regard these words as being *a commendation of the Teacher himself*. “Come unto *me* and learn; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” As much as to say, “I can teach, and you will not find it hard to learn of me.” In fact, the subject of this morning’s discourse is briefly this: the gentle, lovely character of Christ should be a high and powerful inducement to sinners to come to Christ. I intend so to use it: first of all, noticing *the two qualities* which Christ here claims for himself. He is “*meek*,” and then he is “*lowly in heart*,” and after we have observed these two things, I shall come to *push the conclusion home*. Come unto him, all ye that are labouring and are heavy laden; come unto him, and take his yoke upon you; for he is meek and lowly in heart.

I. First, then, I am to consider THE FIRST QUALITY WHICH JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS. He declares that he is “MEEK.”

Christ is no egotist; he takes no praise to himself. If ever he utters a word in self-commendation, it is not with that object; it is with another design, namely that he may entice souls to come to him. Here, in order to exhibit this meekness, I shall have to speak of him in several ways.

1. First, Christ is meek, as opposed to the *ferocity* of spirit manifested by zealots and bigots. Take, for a prominent example of the opposite of meekness, the false prophet Mahomet. The strength of his cause lies in the fact, that he is *not* meek. He presents himself before those whom he claims as disciples, and says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am neither meek, nor lowly

in heart; I will have no patience with you; there is my creed, or there is the scimitar— death or conversion, whichever you please.” The moment the Mahometan religion withdrew that very forcible argument of decapitation or impalement, it stayed in its work of conversion, and never progressed; for the very strength of the false prophet lays in the absence of any meekness. How opposite this is to Christ! Although he hath a right to demand man’s love and man’s faith, yet he comes not into the world to demand it with fire and sword. His might is under persuasion; his strength is quiet forbearance, and patient endurance; his mightiest force is the sweet attraction of compassion and love. He knoweth nothing of the ferocious hosts of Mahomet; he bids none of us draw our sword to propagate the faith, but saith, “Put up thy sword into its scabbard; they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.” “My kingdom is not of this world, else might my servants fight.” Nay, Mahomet is not the only instance we can bring; but even good men are subject to the like mistakes. They imagine that religion is to be spread by terror and thunder. Look at John himself, the most lovely of all the disciples: he would call fire from heaven on a village of Samaritans, because they rejected Christ. Hark to his hot enquiry,—“Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Christ’s disciples were to him something like the sons of Zeruah to David; or when Shimei mocked David, the sons of Zeruah said, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.” But David meekly said, “What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah?”—and put them aside. He had something of the spirit of his Master; he knew that *his* honour was not then to be defended by sword or spear. O blessed Jesus! thou hast no fury in thy spirit; when men rejected thee thou didst not draw the sword to smite, but, on the contrary, thou didst yield thine eyes to weeping. Behold your Saviour, disciples, and see whether he was not meek. He had long preached in Jerusalem without effect, and at last he knew that they were ready to put him to death; but what saith he, as, standing on the top of the hill, he beheld the city that had rejected his gospel? Did he invoke a curse upon it? Did he suffer one word of anger to leap from his burning heart? Ah! no; there were flames, but they were those of love; there were scalding drops, but they were those of grief. He beheld the city, and wept over it, and 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.” And for a further proof of the absence of all uncharitableness, observe that, even when they drove the nails into his blessed hands, yet he had no curse to breathe upon them, but his dying exclamation was, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” O sinners! see what a Christ it is that we bid you serve. No angry bigot, no fierce warrior, claiming your unwilling faith: he is a tender Jesus. Your rejection of him has made his bowels yearn over you; and though you abhor his gospel, he has pleaded for you, saying, “Let him alone yet another year, till I dig about him; peradventure he may yet bring forth fruit.” What a patient master is he! Oh! will you not serve him!

2. But the idea is not brought out fully, unless we take another sense. There *is* a sternness which cannot be condemned. A Christian man will often feel him self called to bear most solemn and stern witness against the error of his times, But Christ’s mission, although it certainly did testify against the sin of his times, yet had a far greater reference to the salvation of the souls of men. To show the idea that I have in my own mind, which I have not yet brought out, I must picture Elijah. What a man was he! His mission was to be the bold unflinching advocate of the right, and to bear a constant testimony against the wickedness of his age. And how boldly did he speak! Look at him: how grand the picture! Can you not conceive him on that memorable day, when he met Ahab, and Ahab said, “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” Do you mark that mighty answer which Elijah

gave him, while the king trembles at his words. Or, better still, can you picture the scene when Elijah said, "Take you two bullocks, ye priests, and build an altar, and see this day, whether God be God or Baal be God." Do you see him as he mocks the worshippers of Baal, and with a biting irony says to them, "Cry aloud, for he is a god." And do you see him in the last grand scene, when the fire has come down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice, and licked up the water, and burned the altar? Do you hear him cry, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one escape?" Can you see him in his might hewing them in pieces by the brook, and making their flesh a feast for the fowls of heaven? Now, you cannot picture Christ in the same position. He had the stern qualities of Elijah, but he kept them, as it were, behind, like sleeping thunder, that must not as yet waken and lift up its voice. There were some rumblings of time tempest, it is true, when he spoke so sternly to the Sadducees, and Scribes, and Pharisees; those woes were like murmurings of a distant storm, but it was *a distant* storm; whereas, Elijah lived in the midst of the whirlwind itself, and was no still small voice, but was as the very fire of God, and hike the chariot in which he mounted to heaven—fit chariot for such a fiery man! Christ here stands in marked contrast. Picture him in somewhat a like position to Elijah with Ahab. There is Jesus left alone with an adulterous woman. She has been taken in the very fact. Her accusers are present, ready to bear witness against her. By a simple sentence he emptied the room of every witness; convicted by their conscience they all retire. And now what does Christ say? The woman might have lifted her eyes, and have looked at him, and said, "Hast thou found me O mine enemy?"—for she might have regarded Christ as the enemy of so base a sin as that which she had committed against her marriage bed. But instead thereof Jesus said, "Doth no man condemn thee? Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." Oh, how different from the sternness of Elijah! Sinners! if I had to preach Elijah as your Saviour I should feel that I had a hard task, for you might throw it in my teeth—"Shall we come to Elijah? He will call fire from heaven on us, as he did upon the captains and their fifties. Shall we come to Elijah? Surely he will slay us, for we have been like the prophets of Baal?" Nay, sinners; but I bid you come to Christ. Come to him, who, although he hated sin more than Elijah could do, yet nevertheless, loved the sinner—who, though he would not share iniquity, yet spares the transgressors, and has no words but those of love and mercy, and peace and comfort, for those of you who will now come and put your trust in him.

I must put in a word here by way of caveat. I am very far from imputing, for a single moment, any blame to Elijah. He was quite right. None but Elijah could have fulfilled the mission which his Master gave him. He needed to be all he was, and certainly not less stern; but Elijah was not sent to be a Saviour; he was quite unfit for that. He was sent to administer a stern rebuke. He was God's iron tongue of threatening, not God's silver tongue of mercy. Now, Jesus is the silver tongue of grace. Sinners! hear the sweet bells ringing, as Jesus now invites you to come unto him. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" for I am not stern, I am not harsh, I am no fire-killing Elijah; I am the meek, tender, lowly-hearted Jesus."

3. Christ is meek in heart. To exhibit this quality in another light, call to your minds Moses. Moses was the meekest of men; and yet Christ far excels Moses in his meekness. Around Moses there seems to be a hedge, a ring of fire. The character of Moses is like Mount Sinai; it hath bounds set about it, so that one cannot draw near unto him. Moses was not an approachable person, he was quiet and meek, and tender, but there was a sacred majesty about the King in Jeshurun that hedged his path, so that we cannot imagine the people making themselves familiar with him. Whoever read of Moses sitting down upon a well, and talking to a harlot like the woman of Samaria? Whoever

heard a story of a Magdalene washing the feet of Moses? Can ye conceive Moses eating bread with a sinner, or passing under a sycamore tree, and calling Zaccheus, the thievish publican, and bidding him come down? There is a kind of stately majesty in Moses, no mere affectation of standing alone, but a loneliness of superior worth. Men looked up to him as to some cloud-capped mountain, and despaired of being able to enter into the lofty circle, within which they might have communed with him. Moses always had in spirit what he once had in visible token; he had a glory about his brow, and before he could converse with men he must wear a veil, for they could not bear to look upon the face of Moses. But how different is Jesus! He is a man among men; wherever he goes no one is afraid to speak to him. You scarcely meet with any one who dares not approach him. There is a poor woman, it is true, who hath the flux, and she fears to come near him, because she is ceremonially unclean; but even she can come behind him in the press, and touch the hem of his garment, and virtue goeth Out of him. Nobody was afraid of Jesus. The mothers brought their little babes to him: whoever heard of their doing that to Moses? Did ever babe get a blessing of Moses? But Jesus was all meekness—the approachable man, feasting with the wedding guests, sitting down with sinners, conversing with the unholy and the unclean, touching the leper, and making himself at home with all men. Sinners! this is the one we invite you to—this homely man, Christ. Not to Moses, for you might say, “He hath horns of light, and how shall I draw near to his majesty ! He is bright perfection—the very lightnings of Sinai rest upon his brow.” But sinners, ye cannot say that of Christ. He is as holy as Moses—as great, and far greater, but he is still so homely that ye may come to him. Little children, ye may put your trust in him. Ye may say your little prayer,

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

He will not cast you away, or think you have intruded on him. Ye harlots, ye drunkards, ye feasters, ye wedding guests, ye may all come; “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” He is “meek and lowly in heart.” That gives, I think, a still fuller and broader sense to the term, “meek.”

4. But yet, to push the term a little further. Christ on earth was a king; but there as nothing about him of the exclusive pomp of kings, which excludes the common people from their society. Look at the Eastern king Ahasuerus, sitting on his throne. He is considered by his people as a superior being. None may come in unto the king, unless he is called for. Should he venture to pass the circle, the guards will slay him, unless the king stretches out the golden sceptre. Even Esther, his beloved wife, is afraid to draw near, and must put her life in her hand, if she comes into the presence of the king uncalled. Christ is a king; but where his pomp? Where the Janitor that keeps his door, and thrusts away the poor? Where the soldiers that ride on either side of his chariot to screen the monarch from the gaze of poverty? See thy King, O Sion! He comes, he comes in royal pomp! Behold, Judah, behold thy King cometh! But how cometh he? “Meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.” And who are his attendants? See, the young children, boys and girls! They cry, “Hosannah! Hosannah! Hosannah!” And who are they that wait upon him? His poor disciples. They pull the branches from the trees; they cast their garments in the street, and there he rideth on— Judah’s royal King. His courtiers are the poor; his pomp is that tribute which grateful hearts delight to offer. O sinners, will you not come to Christ? There is nothing in him to keep you back. You need not say, like Esther did of old, “I will go in unto the king, if I perish I

perish. Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! Christ is more ready to receive you than you are to come to him. Come to the King! “What is thy petition, and what is thy request? It shall be done unto thee.” If thou stayest away, it is not because he shuts the door, it is because thou wilt not come. Come, filthy, naked, ragged, poor, lost, ruined, come, just as thou art. Here he stands, like a fountain freely opened for all comers. “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.”

5. I will give you but one more picture to set forth the meekness of Christ, and I think I shall not have completed the story without it. The absence of all selfishness from the character of Christ, makes one ingredient of this precious quality of his meekness. You remember the history of Jonah. Jonah is sent to prophecy against Nineveh; but he is selfish. He will not go for he shall get no honour by it. He does not want to go so long a journey for so small a price. He will not go. He will take a ship and go to Tarshish. He is thrown out into the sea, swallowed by a fish, and vomited by it upon dry land. He goes away to Nineveh, and not wanting courage, he goes through its streets, crying, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” That one man’s earnest cry moves the city from one end to the other. The king proclaims a first; the people mourn in sackcloth and confess their sins. God sends them tidings of mercy, and they are spared. But what will Jonah do? Oh, tell it not, ye heavens; let none hear it—that ever a prophet of God could do the like! He sits himself down, and he is angry with God. And why his anger? Because, says he, “God has not destroyed that city.” If God had destroyed the city he would have shouted over the ruins, because his reputation would have been safe; but now that the city is saved, and his own reputation for a prophet tarnished, he must needs sit down in anger. But Christ is the very reverse of this. Sinners! Christ does thunder at you sometimes, but it is always that he may bring you to repentance. He does take Jonah’s cry, and utter it far more mightily than Jonah could; he does warn you that there is a fire that never can be quenched, and a worm that dieth not; but if you turn to him, will he sit down and be angry? Oh! no; methinks I see him. There you come poor prodigals; your father falls upon your neck and kisses you, and you are accepted, and a feast is made. Here comes the elder brother, Jesus. What does he say? Is he angry because you are saved? Ah! no! “My Father,” saith he, “my younger brother have all come home, and I love them; they shall share my honours; they shall sit upon my throne; they shall share my heaven.” “Where I am, there they shall be also.” I will take them into union with myself, and as they *have wasted their inheritance, all that I have shall be their’s for ever.* Oh! come home, prodigal, there is no angry brother and no angry father. Come back, come back, my brother, my wandering brother, I invite thee; for Jesus is rejoiced to receive thee. Do you not see, then, that the meekness of Christ is a sweet and blessed reason why we should come to him?

II. The second virtue which Christ claims for himself, is **LOWLINESS OF HEART.**

When I looked this passage out in the original, I half wondered how it was that Christ found such a sweet word for the expression of his meaning; for the Greeks, do not know much about humility, and they have not a very good word to set forth this idea of lowliness of heart. I find that if this passage stood in another connection, the word might even be interpreted “degraded, debased,” for the Greeks thought that if a man was humble, he degraded himself—that if he stooped, he debased himself right out. “Well,” says Christ, “if you think so, so be it, and he takes the word. The word means, “near the ground.” So is Christ’s heart. We cannot be so low that he will not stoop to reach us. I would just set out the lowliness of Christ’s heart in this way. Christ is “lowly in heart;” that is, he is willing to receive *the poorest* sinner in the world. The pharisee thought that the keeper of the gate of heaven would admit only the rich, and not the poor. Mark Christ’s teaching. There

were two came to the gate once upon a time; one was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; he knocked, and thought that full sure he must enter; but “in hell he lift up his eyes being in torments.” There came another, borne on angel’s wings. It was a beggar, whose many sores the dogs had licked and he had not so much as to knock at the gate, for the angel’s carried him straight away into the very centre of paradise, and laid him in Abraham’s bosom. Jesus Christ is willing to receive beggars into his bosom. Kings, you know, condescend, when they permit even the rich to be presented to them, and the kissing of a monarch’s hand is something very wonderful indeed, but to have the kisses of *his* lips who is the King of kings, is no uncommon thing for men that are shivering in rags, or that are sick upon miserable beds, in dingy attics. Christ is “lowly in heart;” he goes with what men call the vulgar herd; he hath nothing of affected royalty about him—he hath a nobler royalty than that, the royalty that is too proud to think anything of a stoop, that can only measure itself by its own intrinsic excellence, and not by its official standing. He receiveth the lowest, the meanest, the vilest, for he is “lowly in heart.” If I have among my congregation some of the poorest of the poor, let them come away to Christ, and let them not imagine that their poverty need keep them back. I am always delighted when I see a number of women here from the neighbouring workhouse. I bless God that there are some in the workhouse that are willing to come; and though they have sometimes been put to a little inconvenience by so doing, yet I have known them sooner give up their dinner than give up coming to hear the Word. God bless the workhouse women, and may they be led to Christ, for he is meek and lowly in heart, and will not reject them. I must confess also, I like to see a smock frock here and there in the midst of the congregation. Oh! what a mercy, that in the palace of the Great King there shall be found these workmen, these blouses, They shall be made partakers of the kingdom of God. He makes no difference between prince and pauper; he takes men to heaven just as readily from the workhouse, as from the palace.

Further, this lowliness of heart in Christ leads him to receive the most *ignorant* as well as the learned to himself. I know that sometimes poor ignorant people get a notion in their heads that they cannot be saved, because they cannot read and do not know much. I have sometimes, especially in country villages, received this answer, when I have been asking anything about personal religion. “Well, you know, sir, I never had any learning.” Oh! but, ye unlearned, is this a reason why ye should stay away from him who is lowly in heart? It was said of an old Greek philosopher, that he wrote over his door, “None but the learned may enter here.” But Christ, on the contrary, writes over his door, “He that is simple let him turn in hither.” There are many great men with long handles to their names who know little of the gospel, while some of the poor unlettered ones spell out the whole secret, and become perfect masters in divinity. If they had degrees who deserve them, diplomas should often be transferred, and given to those who hold the plough handle or work at the carpenter’s bench; for there is often more divinity in the little finger of a ploughman than there is in the whole body of some of our modern divines. “Don’t they understand divinity?” you say. Yes, in the letter of it; but as to the spirit and life of it, D.D. often means DOUBLY DESTITUTE.

The lowliness of Christ may be clearly seen in yet another point of view. He is not only willing to receive the poor, and to receive the ignorant, but he is also ever ready to receive men, despite the vileness of their characters. Some teachers can stoop, and freely too, to both poor and ignorant; but they cannot stoop to the wicked. I think we have all felt a difficulty here. “However poor a man may be, or however little he knows,” you say, “I don’t mind talking with him, and trying to do him good; but I cannot talk with a man who is a rogue or a vagabond, or with a woman who has lost

her character." I know you cannot; there are a great many things Christ did which we cannot do. We, who are the servants of Christ, have attempted to draw a line where duty has its bound. Like the domestic servant in some lordly mansion who stoops not to menial employment. We are above our work. We are so fastidious, that we cannot go after the chief of sinners, and the vilest of the vile. Not so, Christ. "He receiveth sinners and *eateth with them*." He, in the days of his flesh, became familiar with the outcasts. He sought them out that he might save them; he entered their homes; he found his way into the slums. like some diligent officer of the police, he was willing to lodge where they lodged, eat at their table, and associate with their class to find them out. His *mission was to seek as well as to save*. Oh, see him stand, with arms wide open! Will that thief, who is justly executed for his crimes, be recognized by him? Yes, he will. There, with his arms outstretched, he hangs; the thief flies as it were to his bosom, and Jesus gives him a most blessed embrace. "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Christ has received the thief with open heart and open arms too. And there is Mary. Do you see her? She is washing the feet of Jesus. Why, she is a bad character, one of the worst women on the town. What will Christ say? Say? Why, hear how he speaks to Simon, the pious, reputable Pharisee. Saith he, after putting the parable concerning the two debtors, "which of them shall love him most?"—and then he explains that this woman hath had much forgiven, and therefore she loves him much. "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven," saith he, and she goes her way in peace. There are many men you and I would not demean ourselves to notice, that Christ will take to heaven at last; for he is "lowly in heart." He takes the base, the vilest, the scum, the offscouring, the filth, the garbage of the world, and out of such stuff and matter as that, he buildeth up a holy temple, and gathereth to himself trophies for his honour and praise.

And further, while I speak of the lowliness of Christ's heart, I must remark another thing. Perhaps one is saying here, "Oh! sir, it is not what I have been, as to my conduct, that keeps me back from Christ; but I feel that what I am as to my nature restrains me; I am such a dolt, I shall never learn in his school I am such a hard-hearted one, he will never melt me, and if he does save me, I shall never be worth his having. Yes, but Christ is "lowly in heart." There are some great goldsmiths that of course can only think of preparing and polishing the choicest diamonds; but Jesus Christ polishes a common pebble, and makes a jewel of it. Goldsmiths make their precious treasures out of precious materials; Christ makes his precious things out of dross. He begins always with bad material. The palace of our king is not made of cedar wood, as Solomon's, or if it be made of wood, certainly he has chosen the knottiest trees and the knottiest planks wherewith to build his habitation. He has taken those to be his scholars who were the greatest dunces; so amazing is the lowliness of Christ's heart. He sits down on the form with us to teach us the A,B,C, of repentance, and if we are slow to learn it he begins again, and takes us through our alphabet, and if we forget it he will often teach us our letters over again; for though he is able to teach the angels, yet he condescends to instruct babes, and as we go step by step in heavenly literature, Christ is not above teaching the elements. He teaches not only in the University, and the Grammar-school, where high attainments are valued, but he teaches in the day-school, where the elements and first principles are to be instilled. It is he who teaches the sinner, what *sinner* means *in deep* conviction, and what faith means in holy assurance. It is not only he who takes us to Pisgah, and bids us view the promised land, but it is he also who takes us to Calvary, and makes us learn that simplest of all things, the sacred writing of the cross. He, if I may use such a phrase, will not only teach us how to write them highly ornamental writing of the Eden Paradise, the richly gilded, illuminated letters of communion and fellowship, but he teaches us how to make the pot-hooks amid hangers of repentance and faith.

he begins at the beginning; for he is “meek and lowly in heart.” Come, then, ye dolts, ye fools; come ye *sinner*s, ye vile ones; come, ye dullest of all scholars, ye poor, ye illiterate, ye who are rejected and despised of men; come to him who was rejected and despised as well as you. Come and welcome! Christ bids you come!

“Let not conscience make you linger;
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you;
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam.

Come, poor sinners! come to a gentle Saviour! and you shall never regret that you came to him.

III. Having thus spoken on the two marks of our Lord's character, I propose to conclude, if God shall help me, by knocking home the nail, by driving in the wedge, and pressing upon you a conclusion from these arguments. The conclusion of the whole matter is this, since Christ is “meek and lowly in heart,” sinners come to him.

Come to him, then, first, whoever you may be, for he is “meek and lowly in heart.” When a man has done anything wrong, and wants a help through his difficulty, if about to employ some counsel to plead for him in a court of law, he might say, “Oh! don't engage Mr. So-and-so for me; I hear he *is a* very hard-hearted man; I should not like to tell him what I have done, and entrust my case in his hands. Send for Mr. So-and-so; I have heard that he is very kind and gentle; let him come and hear my case, and let him conduct the pleadings for me:” Sinner! you are sinful, but Christ is very tender-hearted. Speed thy way to Christ's private chamber,—your own closet of prayer. Tell him all you have done; he will not upbraid you: confess all your sins; he will not chide you. Tell him all your follies; he will not be angry with you. Commit your case to him, and with a sweet smile he will say, “I have cast thy sins behind my back; thou hast come to reason with me; I will discover to thee a matter of faith which excels all reason,—“ Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow Come to Christ, then, sinful ones, because he is “meek and lowly in heart,” and he can bear with the narrative of your offences. “But, sir, I am very timid, and I dare not go.” Ah, but however timid you may be, you need not be afraid of him. He knows your timidity, and he will meet you with a smile, and say, “Fear not. Be of good cheer. Tell me thy sin, put thy trust in me, and thou shalt even yet rejoice to know my power to save. Come *now*,” saith he, “come to me at once. Linger no longer. *I* do not strive nor cry, nor cause my voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed I will not break, the smoking flax I will not quench; but I will bring forth judgment unto victory.” Come then, ye timid ones to Christ for he is meek and lowly in heart. “Oh,” says one, “but I am despairing; I have been so long under a sense of sin, I cannot go to Christ.” Poor soul! he is so meek and lowly, that, despairing though thou mayest be, take courage now; though it be like a forlorn hope to thee, yet go to him. Say, in the words of the hymn—

“I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;

For if I stay away, I know
 I must for ever die.”
 And you may add this comfortable reflection—
 “But if I die with mercy sought,
 When I the King have tried,
 This were to die (delightful thought!)
 As sinner never died.”

Come to him, then, timid and despairing; for he is “meek and lowly in heart.” First, he bids thee confess. What a sweet confessor! Put thy lip to his ear, and tell him all. He is “meek and lowly in heart.” Fear not. None of thy sins can move him to anger. If thou dost but confess them. If thou keepest them in thy heart, they shall be like a slumbering *volcano*; and a *furnace of destruction thou shalt* find even to the uttermost by-and-bye. But confess thy sins; tell them all; he is meek and lowly in heart.” Happy confession! when we have such a confessor.

Again, he bids thee trust him; and canst thou not trust him? He is “meek and lowly *in heart*.” Sinner! put confidence in Christ. There never was such a tender heart as his, never such a compassionate face. Look him in the face, poor soul, as thou seest him dying on the tree, and say, is not that a face that any man might trust! Look at him! Canst thou doubt him? Wilt thou withhold thy cause from such a Redeemer as this? No, Jesus! thou art so generous, so good, so kind Take thou my cause in hand. Just as I am, I come to thee. Save me, I beseech thee, for I put my trust in thee.

And then Jesus not only bids you confess and believe, but he bids you afterwards serve him. And sure, sinners, this should be a reason why you should do it. that he is so “meek and lowly in heart.” It is said, “Good masters make good servants.” What good servants you and I ought to be, for what a good Master we have! Never an ill word doth he say to us. If sometimes he pointeth out anything we have done amiss, it is only for our good. Not for his profit doth he chasten, but for ours. Sinner! I ask thee not to serve the god of this world—that foul fiend who shall destroy thee after all thy service. The devil is thy master now, and ye have heard the wages he bestows. But come and serve Christ, the meek and lowly one, who will give thee good cheer while thou art serving him, and give thee a blessed reward when thy work is done.

And now, best of all, sinners! come to Christ. Come to him in all his offices, for he is “meek and lowly in heart.” Sinner! thou art sick—Christ is a physician. If men have broken a bone, and they are about to have a surgeon fetched, they say, “Oh! is he a feeling tender hearted man?” For there is many an army surgeon that takes off a leg, and never thinks of the pain he is giving. “Is he a kind man?” says the poor sufferer, when he is about to be strapped down upon the table.” Ah! poor sufferer, Christ will heal thy broken bones, and he will do it with downy fingers. Never was there so light a touch as this heavenly surgeon has. “Tis pleasure even to be wounded by him, much more to be healed, Oh! what balm is that he gives to the poor bleeding heart! Fear not; there was never such a physician as this. If he give thee now and then a bitter pill and a sour draught, yet he will give thee such honied words and such sweet promises therewith, that thou shalt swallow it all up without murmuring. Nay, if he be with thee, thou canst even swallow up death in victory; and never know that thou hast died because victory hath taken the bitter taste away.

Sinner! thou art not only sick, and therefore bidden to come to him, but thou art moreover in debt, and he offers now to pay thy debts, and to discharge them in full. Come, come to him, for he is not harsh. Some men, when they do mean to let a debtor off, first have him in their office, and

give him as much as they can of the most severe rebukes;—" You rogue, you! how dare you get in my debt, when you knew you could not pay? You have brought a deal of trouble on yourself, you have ruined your family," and so forth; and the good man gives him some very sound admonition, and very right too; till at length he says, "I'll let you off this time; come, now, I forgive you, and I hope you will never do so again." But Christ is even better than this. "There is all your debt," he says, "I have nailed it to the cross; sinner, I forgive thee all," and not one accusing word comes from his lips. Come, then, to him.

I fear I have spoilt my master in the painting; something like the artist who had to depict some fair damsel, and he so misrepresented her features, that she lost her reputation for beauty. I have sometimes feared lest I should do the same, and so distort the face of Christ, and so fail of giving the true likeness of his character that you would not love him. Oh! could you see him! If he could stand here for one moment, and tell you that he was meek and lowly in heart. Oh, methinks you would run to him and say, "Jesus, we come Thou meek and lowly Messiah, be thou our all!" Nay, you would not come; I am mistaken. If sovereign grace draw you not under the sound of the gospel, neither would you be converted though Christ should appear before you. But hear now the message of that gospel—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved; for he that believeth on him, and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not, must be damned."

The Blind Beggar

A Sermon

(No. 266)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 7th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”—Mark 10:46-52.

THIS POOR MAN was beset with two great evils—blindness and poverty. It is sad enough to be blind, but if a man that is blind is in possession of riches, there are ten thousand comforts which may help to cheer the darkness of his eye and alleviate the sadness of his heart. But to be both blind and poor, these were a combination of the sternest evils. One thinks it scarcely possible to resist the cry of a beggar whom we meet in the street if he is blind. We pity the blind man when he is surrounded with luxury, but when we see a blind man in want, and following the beggar’s trade in the frequented streets, we can hardly forbear stopping to assist him. This case of Bartimeus, however, is but a picture of our own. We are all by nature blind and poor. It is true we account ourselves able enough to see; but this is but one phase of our blindness. Our blindness is of such a kind that it makes us think our vision perfect; whereas, when we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we discover our previous sight to have been blindness indeed. Spiritually, we are blind; we are unable to discern our lost estate; unable to behold the blackness of sin, or the terrors of the wrath to come. The unrenewed mind is so blind, that it perceives not the allattractive beauty of Christ; the Sun of Righteousness may arise with healing beneath his wings, but ‘twere all in vain for those who cannot see his shining. Christ may do many mighty works in their presence, but they do not recognize his glory; we are blind until he has opened our eyes. But besides being blind we are also by nature poor. Our father Adam spent our birthright, lost our estates. Paradise, the homestead of our race, has become dilapidated, and we are left in the depths of beggary without anything with which we may buy bread for our hungry souls, or raiment for our naked spirits; blindness and beggary are the lot of all men after a spiritual fashion, till Jesus visits them in love. Look around then, ye children of God; look around you this morning, and ye shall see in this hall many a counterpart of poor blind Bartimeus sitting by the wayside begging. I hope there be many such come here, who though they be blind, and naked and poor, nevertheless are begging—longing to get something more than they have—not content with their position. With just enough spiritual life and sensitiveness to know their misery, they have come up to this place begging. Oh that while Jesus passes by this day they

may have faith to cry aloud to him for mercy! Oh may his gracious heart be moved by their thrilling cry, "Jesus thou Son of David have mercy on me!" Oh may he turn and give sight unto such, that they may follow him and go on their way rejoicing!

This morning I shall address myself most particularly to the poor and blind souls here to-day. The poor blind man's faith described in this passage of Scripture, is a fit picture of the faith which I pray God you may be enabled to exert to the saving of your souls. We shall notice *the origin of his faith, how his faith perceived its opportunity when Jesus passed by; we shall listen to his faith while it cries and begs; we shall look upon his faith while it leaps in joyous obedience to the divine call; and then we shall hear his faith describing his case: "Lord, that I might receive my sight;"* and I trust we shall be enabled to rejoice together with this poor believing man, when his sight is restored, as we see him in the beauty of thankfulness and gratitude follow Jesus in the way.

I. First, then, we shall note THE ORIGIN OF THIS POOR BLIND MAN'S FAITH. He had faith, for it was his faith which obtained for him his sight. Now, where did he get it? We are not told in this passage how Bartimeus came to believe Jesus to be the Messiah; but I think we may very fairly risk a conjecture. It is quite certain that Bartimeus did not come to believe in Christ from what he saw. Jesus had worked many miracles; many eyes had seen, and many hearts had believed because of what they saw. Bartimeus also believed, but certainly not as the result of his eyesight, for he was stone-blind. No ray of light had ever burst into his soul; he was shut up in thick darkness and could see nothing. How then was it that he came to believe? It certainly could not have been because he had traveled much through the country, for blind men stay at home; they care not to journey far. There is nothing they can see. However fair the landscape, they cannot drink it in with their eyes; whatever lovely spots others may behold, there are no attractions for their blank survey. They therefore stay at home. And especially a mendicant like this, how should he travel? He would be perhaps unknown out of the city in which his father Timeus had lived—even Jericho. He could not move the heart of strangers to charity, nor would he be likely to find a guide to conduct him throughout the dreary miles of that land. He would be almost necessarily a poor blind stay-at-home. Then how did he acquire his faith? Methinks it might be in this fashion. On the nearest bank he could find outside Jericho, he sat begging in the sunlight; for blind men always love to bask in the sun. Though they see nothing, there is a kind of glimmering that penetrates the visual organ, and they rejoice in it. At least they feel the heat of the great orb of day if they see not his light. Well, as he sat there, he would hear the passers by talking of Jesus of Nazareth, and as blind men are usually inquisitive, he would ask them to stay and tell him the story—some tale of what Jesus had done; and they would tell him how he raised the dead, and healed the leper; and he would say, "I wonder if he can give sight to the blind." And one day it came to pass, that he was told Jesus had restored to sight a man who had been born blind. This indeed was the great master-story that the world has to tell, for it had never been so known before in Israel, that a man who had been born blind should have his eyes opened. I think I see the poor man as he hears the story, he drinks it in, claps his hands, and cries, "Then there is yet hope for me. Mayhap the Prophet will pass this way, and if he doth, oh I will cry to him, I will beg him to open my eyes too; for if the worst case has been cured, then surely mine may be." Many and many a day as he sat there, he would call to the passer by again, and would say, "Come tell me the story of the man that was born blind and of Jesus of Nazareth that opened his eyes," and perhaps he would even get tiresome, as blind men are wont. He must hear the story told him a hundred times over, and always would there be a smile on the poor fellow's face when he heard the refreshing narrative. It never could be told too often, for

he loved to hear it. To him it was like a cool refreshing breeze in the heat of burning sun. "Tell it me, tell it me, tell it me again," says he—"the sweet story of the man that opened the eyes of the blind." And methinks as he sat all alone, and unable to divert his mind with many things, he would always keep his heart fixed on that one narrative, and turn it over, and over, and over again, till in his day-dreams he would half think he could see, and sometimes almost imagine that his own eyes were going to be opened too. Perhaps on one of those occasions, as he was turning over this in his mind, some text of Scripture he had heard in the synagogue, occurred to him; he heard that Messiah should come to open the eyes of the blind, and quick in thought, having better eyes within than he had without, he came at once to the conclusion that the man who could open the eyes of the blind was none other than the Messiah; and from that day he was a secret disciple of Jesus. He might have heard him scoffed at, but *he* did not scoff. How could he scoff at one who had opened the eyes of the blind? He might have heard many a passer-by reviling Christ, and calling him an impostor, but *he* could not join in the reviling. How could he be a deceiver who gave sight to poor blind men? I fancy this would be the cherished dream of his life. And perhaps for the two or three years of the Saviour's ministry, the one thought of the poor blind man would be, "Jesus of Nazareth opened the eyes of one that was blind." That story which he had heard led him to believe Jesus must be the predicted Messiah.

Now, O ye spiritually blind, ye spiritually poor, how is it ye have not believed in Christ? Ye have heard the wondrous deeds which he has done; "Faith cometh by hearing." Ye have understood how one after another has been pardoned and forgiven; you have stood in the house of God and listened to the confession of the penitent and the joyous shout of the believer, and yet you believe not. You have journeyed up year after year to the sanctuary of God, and ye have heard many stories—many a glorious narrative of the pardoning power of Christ; and how is it, O ye spiritually blind, that ye have never thought on him? Why is it you have not turned this over and over in your minds. "This man receiveth sinners, and will he not receive me?" How is it that ye have not recollected that he who put away the sin of Paul and Magdalene can put away your's also. Surely, if but one story told into the ear of the poor blind man could give him faith, if his faith came but by one hearing, how is it that though ye have heard many times that there was no salvation without faith in Christ, and listened to many an earnest appeal, yet ye have not believed? Yet, it may be, I have among these poor blind men some here to-day that are simply believing. You have never yet laid hold of faith, but still in the depths of your soul there is a something which says, "Yes he is able to save me; I know he hath power to forgive," and sometimes the voice speaks a little louder, and it cheers your heart with a thought like this, "Go to him he will not cast you away, he has never cast out one yet who did venture upon his power and goodness." Well, my dear hearer, if thou art in this plight, thou art happy, and I am a happy man to have the privilege of addressing thee—it shall not be long ere the faith within thee, which has been born by hearing, shall acquire strength enough to exercise itself to gain the blessing. That is the first thing—the origin of the faith of poor blind Bartimeus, it doubtless came by hearing.

II. Now, in the next place, we shall notice his faith in ITS QUICKNESS AT GRASPING THE GRACIOUS OPPORTUNITY.

Jesus had been through Jericho, and as he went into the city there was a blind man standing by the way, and Jesus healed *him*. Bartimeus however seems to have resided at the other side of Jericho, therefore he did not get a blessing till Christ was about to leave it. He is sitting down upon his customary spot by the wayside where some friend has left him, that he might remain there all day

and beg, and he hears a great noise and trampling of feet, he wonders what it is, and he asks a passer-by what is that noise? "Why all this tumult?" And the answer is, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." That is but small encouragement, yet his faith had now arrived at such a strength that this was quite enough for him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Unbelief would have said, "He passes by, there is no bearing for you; he passes by, there is no hope of mercy; he is about to leave, and he takes no notice of you." Why, if you and I needed encouragement, we should want Christ to stand still; we should need that some one should say, "Jesus of Nazareth is standing still and looking for you;" ay, but this poor man's faith was of such a character that it could feed on any dry crust on which our puny little faith would have starved. He was like that poor woman, who when she was repused, said, "Truth, Lord, I am but a dog, yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the master's table." He only heard "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by;" but that was enough for him. It was a slender opportunity. He might have reasoned thus with himself, "Jesus is passing by, he is just going out of Jericho; surely he cannot stay now he is on a journey." No, rather did he argue thus with himself, "if he is going out of Jericho, so much the more reason that I should stop him, for this may be my last chance." And, therefore, what unbelief would argue as a reason for stopping his mouth did but open it the wider. Unbelief might have said, "He is surrounded by a great multitude of people, he cannot get at you. His disciples are round about him too, he will be so busy in addressing them that he will never regard your feeble cry." "Ay," said he, "so much the greater reason then that I should cry with all my might;" and he makes the very multitude of people become a fresh argument why he should shout aloud, "Jesus of Nazareth have mercy upon me." So, however slender the opportunity, yet it encouraged him.

And now my dear hearers, we turn to you again. Faith has been in your heart perhaps for many a day, but how foolish have you been; you have not availed yourself of encouraging opportunities as you might have done. How many times has Christ not only passed by, but stopped and knocked at your door, and stood in your house. He has wooed and invited you, and yet you would not come, still trembling and wavering, you durst not exercise the faith you have, and risk the results and come boldly to him. He has stood in your streets,—“Lo these many years,” till the poor blind man's hair would have turned grey with age. He is standing in the street to-day—to-day he addresses you and says, “Sinner come to me and live.” To-day is mercy freely presented to you; to-day is the declaration made—“Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” You poor unbelieving heart will you not, dare you not take advantage of the encouragement to come to him? Your encouragements are infinitely greater than those of this poor blind man, let them not be lost upon you. Come now, this very moment, cry aloud to him now, ask him to have mercy upon you, for now he not only passes by, but he presents himself with outstretched arms, and cries, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest, and life, and salvation.”

Such was the encouragement of this man's faith, and I would that something in the service of this morning, might give encouragement to some poor Bartimeus, who is sitting or standing here.

III. In the third place, having noticed how the faith of the blind man discovered and seized upon this opportunity, the passing by of the gracious Saviour, we have TO LISTEN TO THE CRY OF FAITH. The poor blind man sitting there, is informed that *it is* Jesus of Nazareth. Without a moment's pause or ado, he is up and begins to cry—“Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me—thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” But he is in the middle of a fair discourse, and his hearers like not that he should be interrupted—“Hold thy tongue, blind man. Begone! he cannot attend to thee.” Yet what does the narrative say about him?” He cried the more a great deal;” not only cried he

more, but he cries *a great deal more*. “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” “Oh,” says Peter, “do not interrupt the Master, what are you so noisy for?” “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me:” he repeats it again. “Remove him,” says one, “he interrupts the whole service, take him away,” and so they tried to move him; yet he cries the more vigorously and vehemently, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me—thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Methinks we hear his shout. It is not to be imitated; no *artiste* could throw into an utterance such vehemence or such emotion as this man would cast into it.—“Thou Son of David, have mercy on me ” Every word would tell, every syllable would suggest an argument, there would be the very strength, and might, and blood, and sinew of that man’s life cast into it; he would be like Jacob wrestling with the angel, and every word would be a band to grasp him that he might not go. “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” We have here a picture of the power of faith. In every case, sinner, if thou wouldst be saved, thy faith must exercise itself in crying. The gate of heaven is to be opened only in one way, by the very earnest use of the knocker of prayer. Thou canst not have thine eyes opened until thy mouth is opened. Open thy mouth in prayer, and he shall open thine eyes to see; so shalt thou find joy and gladness. Mark you, when a man hath faith in the soul and earnestness combined with it, he will pray indeed. Call ye not those things prayers that ye hear read in the churches. Imagine not that those orations are prayers that you hear in our prayer-meetings. Prayer is something nobler than all these. That is prayer, when the poor soul in some weighty trouble, fainting and athirst, lifts up its streaming eyes, and wrings its hands, and beats its bosom, and then cries, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Your cold orations will ne’er reach the throne of God. It is the burning lava of the soul that hath a furnace within—a very volcano of grief and sorrow—it is that burning lava of prayer that finds its way to God. No prayer ever reaches God’s heart which does not come from our hearts. Nine out of ten of the prayers which ye listen to in our public services have so little zeal in them, that if they obtained a blessing it would be a miracle of miracles indeed.

My dear hearers, are you now seeking Christ in earnest prayer? Be not afraid of being too earnest or too persevering. Go to Christ this day, agonize and wrestle with him; beg him to have mercy on you, and if he hear you not, go to him again, and again, and again. Seven times a day call upon him, and resolve in your heart that you will never cease from prayer till the Holy Ghost hath revealed to your soul the pardon of your sin. When once the Lord brings a man to this resolve “I will be saved. If I perish, I will still go to the throne of grace and perish only there,” that man cannot perish. He is a saved man, and shall see God’s face with joy. The worst of us is, we pray with a little spasmodic earnestness and then we cease. We begin again, and then once more the fervor ceases and we leave off our prayers. If we would get heaven, we must carry it not by one desperate assault, but by a continuous blockade. We must take it with the red hot shot of fervent prayer. But this must be fired day and night, until at last the city of heaven yields to us. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent must take it by force. Behold the courage of this man. He is hindered by many, but he will not cease to pray. So if the flesh, the devil, and your own hearts should bid you cease your supplication, never do so, but so much the more a great deal cry aloud, “Thou Son of David have mercy on me.”

I must observe here the simplicity of this man’s prayer. He did not want a liturgy or a prayer-book on this occasion. There was something he needed, and he asked for that. When we have our needs at hand they will usually suggest the proper language. I remember a remark of quaint old Bunyan, speaking of those who make prayers for others, “The apostle Paul said he knew not what to pray for, and yet,” says he “there are many infinitely inferior to the apostle Paul, who can write prayers;

who not only know what to pray for, and how to pray, but who know how other people should pray, and not only that, but who know how they ought to pray from the first day of January to the last of December." We cannot dispense with the fresh influence of the Holy Spirit suggesting words in which our needs may be couched; and as to the idea that any form of prayer will ever suit an awakened and enlightened believer, or will ever be fit and proper for the lip of a penitent sinner—I cannot imagine it. This man cried from his heart, the words that came first—the simplest which could possibly express his desire—"Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Go and do thou likewise thou poor blind sinner, and the Lord will hear thee, as he did Bartimeus.

High over the buz and noise of the multitude and the sound of the trampling of feet is heard a sweet voice, which tells of mercy, and of love, and of grace. But louder than that voice is heard a piercing cry—a cry repeated many and many a time—which gathers strength in repetition; and though the throat that utters it be hoarse, yet does the cry wax louder and louder, and stronger still,—“Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” The Master stops. The sound of misery in earnest to be relieved can never be neglected by him. He looks around: there sits Bartimeus. The Saviour can see him, though he cannot see the Saviour: “Bring him hither to me,” saith he; “let him come to me, that I may have mercy on him.” And now, they who had bidden him hold his clamor change their note, and gathering around him they say, “Be of good cheer; rise, he calleth *thee*.” Ah, poor comforters! they would not soothe him when he needed it. What cared he now for all they had to say? The Master had spoken; that was enough, without their officious assistance. Nevertheless they cry, “Arise, he calleth thee;” and they lead him, or are about to lead him, to Christ, but he needs no leading; pushing them aside he hurls back the garment in which he wrapped himself by night—no doubt, a ragged one—and casting that away, the blind man seems as if he really saw at once. The sound guides him, and with a leap, leaving his cloak behind him, waving his hands for very gladness, there he stands in the presence of him who shall give him sight.

IV. We pause here to observe HOW EAGERLY HE OBEYED THE CALL. The Master had but to speak, but to stand still, and command him to be called, and he comes. No pressure is needed. Peter need not pull him by one arm, and John by the other. No; he leaps forward, and is glad to come. “He calleth me, and shall I stand back?”

And now, my dear hearers, how many of you have been called under the sound of the ministry, and yet you have not come: Why is it? did you think that Christ did not mean it when he said—“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?” Why is it that you still keep on at your labors and are still heavy laden? Why do you not come? Oh, come! Leap to him that calleth thee! I pray you cast away the raiment of your worldliness, the garment of your sin. Cast away the robe of your self-righteousness, and come, come away. Why is it that I bid you? Surely if you will not come at the Saviour’s bidding, you will not come at mine, If your own stern necessities do not make you attend to his gracious call, surely nothing I can say can ever move you. O my poor blind brothers and sisters! you, who cannot see Christ to be your Saviour, you that are full of guilt and fear, he calleth you,

“Come ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall.”

Come ye that have no hope, no righteousness; ye outcast, ye desponding, ye distressed, ye lost, ye ruined, come! come! to-day. Whoever will, in your ears to-day doth mercy cry, “Arise, he calleth thee!” O, Saviour! call ye them effectually. Call now: let the Spirit speak. O Spirit of the living God, bid the poor prisoner come, and let him leap to lose his chains. I know that which kept me a

long time from the Saviour was the idea that he had never called me: and yet when I came to him, I discovered that long ere that he had invited me but I had closed my ear, I thought surely he had invited every one else to him, but I must be left out, the poorest and the vilest of them all. O sinner! if such be thy consciousness, then you are one to whom the invitation is specially addressed. Trust him now, justly thou art, with all thy sins about thee, come to him and ask him to forgive thee; plead his blood and merits, and thou canst not, shalt not plead in vain.

V. We proceed towards the conclusion. The man has come to Christ, let US LISTEN TO HIS SUIT. Jesus, with loving condescension takes him by the hand and in order to test him, and that all the crowd might see that he really knew what he wanted, Jesus said to him—"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" How plain the man's confession, not one word too many, he could not have said it in a word less—"Lord that I might receive my sight." There was no stammering here, no stuttering, and saying, "Lord I hardly know what to say." He just told it at once—"Lord that I might receive my sight."

Now if there be a hearer in this house who has a secret faith in Christ, and who has heard the invitation this morning, let me beseech you go home to your chamber, and there, kneeling by your bedside, by faith picture the Saviour saying to you—"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" "Fall on your knees, and without hesitation tell him all, tell him you are guilty, and you desire that he would pardon you. Confess your sins; keep none of them back. Say, "Lord, I implore thee pardon my drunkenness, my profanity, or whatever it may be that I have been guilty of;" and then still imagine thou hearest him saying—"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Tell him, "Lord I would be kept from all these sins in the future. I shall not be content with being pardoned, I want to be renewed;" tell him thou hast a hard heart, ask him to soften it; tell him thou have a blind eye, and thou canst not see thine interest in Christ. Ask him to open it; confess before him thou art full of iniquity and prone to wander; ask him to take thine heart and wash it, and then to set it upon things above, and suffer it no longer to be fond of the things of earth. Tell it out plainly, make a frank and full confession in his presence; and what if it should happen, my dear hearer, that this very day, while thou art in thy chamber, Christ should give thee the touch of grace, put thy sins away, save thy soul, and give thee the joy to know that thou art now a child of God, and now a heir of heaven. Imitate the blind man in the explicitness and straight-forwardness of his confession and his request,—“Lord, that I might receive my sight.”

Once again, how cheering the fact, the blind man had no sooner stated his desire than immediately he received his sight. Oh! how he must have leaped in that moment! What joys must have rushed in upon his spirit! He saw not the men as trees walking, but he received his sight at once; not a glimmer, but a bright full burst of sunlight fell upon his benighted eyeballs. Some persons do not believe in instantaneous conversions, nevertheless they are facts. Man! a man has come into this hall with all his sins about him, and ere he has left it has felt his sins forgiven. He has come here a hardened reprobate, but he has gone away from that day forth to lead a new life, and walk in the fear of God. The fact is, there are many conversions that are gradual; but regeneration after all, at least in the part of it called "quickenings," must be instantaneous, and justification is given to a man as swiftly as the flash of lightning. We are full of sin one hour, but it is forgiven in an instant; and sins, past, present, and to come, are cast to the four winds of heaven in less time than the clock takes to beat the death of a second. The blind man saw immediately.

And now what would you imagine this man would do as soon as his eyes were opened. Has he a father, will he not go to see him? Has he a sister, or a brother, will he not long to get to his

household? Above all has he a partner of his poor blind existence, will he not seek her out to go and tell her that now he can behold the face of one who has so long loved and wept over him? Will he not now want to go and see the temple, and the glories of it? Does he not now desire to look upon the hills and all their beauties, and behold the sea and its storms and all its wonders? No, there is but one thing that poor blind man now longs for—it is that he may always see the man who has opened his eyes. “He followed Jesus in the way.” What a beautiful picture this is of a true convert. The moment his sins are forgiven, the one thing he wants to do is to serve Christ. His tongue begins to itch to tell somebody else of the mercy he has found. He longs to go off to the next shop and tell some workfellow that his sins are all pardoned. He cannot be content. He thinks he could preach now. Put him in the pulpit, and though there were ten thousand before him, he would not blush to say, “He hath taken me out of the miry clay, and out of the horrible pit, and set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song into my mouth and established my goings.” All he now asks is, “Lord, I would follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Let me never lose thy company. Make my communion with thee everlasting. Cause my love to increase. May my service be continual, and in this life may I walk with Jesus, and in the world to come all I ask is that I may live with him.”

You see the crowd going along now. Who is that man in the midst with face so joyous? Who is that man who has lost his upper garment? See he wears the dress of a beggar. Who is he? You would not think there is any beggary about him; for his step is firm and his eye glistening and sparkles, and hearken to him; as he goes along, sometimes he is uttering a little hymn or song; at other times when others are singing, hearken to his notes, the loudest of them all. Who is this man, always so happy and so full of thankfulness? It is the poor blind Bartimeus, who once sat by the wayside begging. And do you see yonder man, his brother, and his prototype? Who is it that sings so heartily in the house of God, and who when he is sitting in that house, or walking by the way is continually humming to himself, some strain of praise? Oh! it is that drunkard who has had his sins forgiven, it is that swearer who has had his profanity cleansed out, it is she who was once a harlot, but is now one of the daughters of Jerusalem,—’tis she who once led others to hell, who now washes her Redeemer’s feet and wipes them with the hairs of her head. Oh, may God grant that this story of Bartimeus may be written over again in your experience, and may you all at last meet where the eternal light of God shall have chased away all blindness, and where the inhabitants shall never say, “I am sick.”

The Tabernacle of the Most High

A Sermon

(No. 267)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 14th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”—Ephesians 2:22.

UNDER THE OLD Mosaic dispensation God had a visible dwelling-place among men. The bright shekinah was seen between the wings of the cherubim which overhadowed the mercy-seat; and in the tabernacle while Israel journeyed in the wilderness, and in the temple afterwards, when they were established in their own land, there was a visible manifestation of the presence of Jehovah in the place which was dedicated to his service. Now, everything under the Mosaic dispensation was but a type, a picture, a symbol of something higher and nobler. That form of worship was, as it were, a series of shadow-pictures, of which the gospel is the substance. It is a sad fact, however, that there is so much Judaism in all our hearts, that we frequently go back to the old beggarly elements of the law, instead of going forward and seeing in them a type of something spiritual and heavenly, to which we ought to aspire. It is disgraceful to the present century to hear some men talk as they do. They had better at once espouse the Jewish creed. I mean it is disgraceful to hear some men speak as they do with regard to religious edifices. I remember to have heard a sermon once upon this text—“If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy.” And the first part of the sermon was occupied with a childish anathema against all who should dare to perform any unhallowed act in the churchyard, or who should lean the pole of a tent during the fair of the coming week against any part of that edifice, which, it seemed to me, was the god of the man who occupied the pulpit. Is there such a thing as a holy place anywhere? Is there any spot wherein God now particularly dwells? I know not. Hear ye the words of Jesus, “Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Remember, again, the saying of the apostle at Athens, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.”

When men talk of holy places they seem to be ignorant of the use of language. Can holiness dwell in bricks and mortar? Can there be such a thing as a sanctified steeple? Can it possibly happen that there can be such a thing in the world as a moral window or a godly door post? I am lost in amazement, utterly lost, when I think how addled men’s brains must be when they impute moral virtues to bricks and mortar, and stones, and stained glass. Pray how deep doth this consecration go, and how high? Is every crow that flies over the edifice at that time in solemn air? Certainly it is as rational to believe that, as to conceive that every worm that is eating the body of an Episcopalian is a consecrated worm, and therefore there must necessarily be a brick wall, or a wide gravel-path to protect the bodies of the sanctified from any unhallowed worms that might creep across from the Dissenters’ side of the cemetery. I say again, such child’s play, such Popery, such Judaism, is

a disgrace to the century. And yet, notwithstanding, we all find ourselves at divers times and seasons indulging in it. That at which you have just now smiled is but pushing the matter a little further, an error into which we may very readily descend; it is but an extravaganza of an error into which we all of us are likely to fall. We have a reverence for our plain chapels; we feel a kind of comfort when we are sitting down in the place which somehow or other we have got to think must be holy.

Now let us if we can, and perhaps it takes a great sturdiness and independence of mind to do it—let us drive away once and for ever, all idea of holiness being connected with anything but with a conscious active agent; let us get rid once and for ever of all superstitions with regard to place. Depend upon it, one place is as much consecrated as another, and wherever we meet with true hearts reverently to worship God, that place becomes for the time being God's house. Though it be regarded with the most religious awe, that place which has no devout heart within it, is no house of God; it may be a house of superstition, but a house of God it cannot be. "But, still," says one, "God hath a habitation; doth not your text say so?" Yes, and of that house of God, I am about to speak this morning. There is such a thing as a house of God; but that is not an inanimate structure, but a living and a spiritual temple. "In whom," that is Christ, "ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The house of God is built with the living stones of converted men and women, and the church of God, which Christ hath purchased with his blood—this is the divine edifice, and the structure wherein God dwelleth even to this day. I would, however, make one remark with regard to places in which we worship. I do think, albeit that there can be no sanctity of superstition connected with them, there is at the same time, a kind of sacredness of association. In any place where God has blessed my soul, I feel that it is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven. It is not because the stones are hallowed, but because there I have met with God, and the recollections that I have of the place consecrate it to me, That place where Jacob laid him down to sleep, what was it but his sleeping chamber for the time being, but his sleeping chamber was none other than the house of God. Ye have rooms in your houses, I hope, and closets there more sacred in truth than any gorgeous cathedral that ever lifted its spire to heaven. Where we meet with God there is a sacredness, not in the place but in the associations connected with it. Where we hold fellowship with God and where God makes bare his arm, though it be in a barn or a hedgerow, or on a moor, or on a mountain side, there is God's house to us, and the place is consecrated at once, but yet not so consecrated as that we may regard it with superstitious awe, but only consecrated by our own recollections of blessed hours which we have spent there in hallowed fellowship with God. Leaving that out of the question, I come to introduce you to the house which God has builded for his habitation.

We shall regard the church this morning thus—first, as *a building*; secondly, as *a habitation*; and thirdly, as what she is soon to become, namely—*a glorious temple*.

I. First, then, we shall regard the church as A BUILDING. And here let us pause to ask the question first of all what is a church—what is the church of God? One sect claims the title for itself of *the church*, while other denominations hotly contend for it. It belongs to none of us. The church of God consisteth not of any one particular denomination of men; the church of God consisteth of those whose names are written in the book of God's eternal choice; the men who were purchased by Christ upon the tree, the men who are called of God by his Holy Spirit and who being quickened by that same Spirit partake of the life of Christ, and become members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. These are to be found in every denomination among all sorts of Christians; some stray ones where we little dreamed of them; here and there a member of the church of God hidden in the

midst of the darkness of accursed Rome; now and then, as if by chance, a member of the church of Christ, connected with no sect whatever, far away from all connection with his brethren, having scarcely heard of their existence yet still knowing Christ, because the life of Christ is in him. Now this church of Christ, the people of God, throughout the world, by whatever name they may be known, are in my text compared to a building in which God dwells.

I must now indulge in a little allegory with regard to this building. The church is not a heap of stones shot together; she is a building. Of old her architect devised her. Methinks I see him, as I look back into old eternity making the first outline of his church. "Here" saith he in his eternal wisdom, "shall be the corner stone, and there shall be the pinnacle," I see him ordaining her length, and her breadth, appointing her gates and her doors with matchless skill, devising every part of her, and leaving no single portion of the structure unmapped. I see him, that mighty architect, also choosing to himself every stone of the building, ordaining its size and its shape; settling upon his mighty plan the position each stone shall occupy, whether it shall glitter in front, or be hidden in the back, or buried in the very center of the wall. I see him marking not merely the bare outline, but all the fillings up; all being ordained, decreed, and settled, in the eternal covenant, which was the divine plan of the mighty architect upon which the church is to be built. Looking on, I see the architect choosing a corner stone. He looks to heaven, and there are the angels, those glittering stones, he looks at each one of them from Gabriel down; but, saith he, "None of you will suffice. I must have a corner stone that will support all the weight of the building, for on that stone every other one must lean. Gabriel, thou wilt not suffice! Raphael thou must lay by; I cannot build with thee." Yet was it necessary that a stone should be found, and one too that should be taken out of the same quarry as the rest. Where was he to be discovered? Was there a man who would suffice to be the corner stone of this mighty building? Ah no! neither apostles, prophets, nor teachers would. Put them altogether, and they would be as a foundation of quicksand, and the house would totter to its fall. Mark how the divine mind solved the difficulty—"God shall become man, very man, and so he shall be of the same substance as the other stones of the temple, yet shall he be God, and therefore strong enough to bear all the weight of this mighty structure, the top whereof shall reach to heaven." I see that foundation stone laid. Is there singing at the laying of it? No. There is weeping there. The angels gathered round at the laying of this first stone; sad look ye men and wonder, the angels weep; the harps of heaven are clothed in sackcloth, and no song is heard. They sang together and shouted for joy when the world was made, why shout they not now? Look ye here and see the reason. That stone is imbedded in blood, that corner stone must lie nowhere else but in his own gore. The vermilion cement drawn from his own sacred veins must imbed it. And there he lies, the first stone of the divine edifice. Oh, begin your songs afresh, ye angels, it is over now. The foundation stone is laid; the terrible ceremony is complete, and now, whence shall we gather the stones to build this temple? The first is laid, where are the rest? Shall we go and dig into the sides of Lebanon? Shall we find these precious stones in the marble quarries of kings? No. Whither are ye flying ye laborers of God? Whither are ye going? Where are the quarries? And they reply—"We go to dig in the quarries of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the depths of sinful Jerusalem, and in the midst of erring Samaria." I see them clear away the rubbish. I mark them as they dig deep into the earth, and at last they come to these stones. But how rough, how hard, how unhewn. Yes, but these are the stones ordained of old in the decree, and these must be the stones, and none other. There must be a change effected. These must be brought in and shaped and cut and polished, and put into their places. I see the workmen at their labor. The great saw of the law cuts through the stone, and

then comes the polishing chisel of the gospel. I see the stones lying in their places, and the church is rising. The ministers, like wise master-builders, are there running along the wall, putting each spiritual stone in its place; each stone is leaning on that massive corner stone, and every stone depending on the blood, and finding its security and its strength in Jesus Christ, the corner stone, elect, and precious. Do you see the building rise as each one of God's chosen is brought in, called by grace and quickened? Do you mark the living stones as in sacred love and holy brotherhood they are knit together? Have you ever entered the building, and see how these stones lean one upon another bearing each others burden, and so fulfilling the law of Christ? Do you mark how the church loveth Christ, and how the members love each other? How first the church is joined to the corner stone, and then each stone bound to the next, and the next to the next, till the whole building becometh one? Lo! the structure rises, and it is complete, and at last it is built. And now open wide your eyes, and see what a glorious building this is—the church of God. Men talk of the splendor of their architecture—this is architecture indeed; neither after Grecian nor Gothic models, but after the model of the sanctuary which Moses saw in the holy mountain. Do you see it? Was there ever a structure so comely as this—instinct with life in every part? Upon one stone shall be seven eyes, and each stone full of eyes and full of hearts. Was ever a thought so massive as this—a building built of souls—a structure made of hearts? There is no house like a heart for one to repose in. There a man may find peace in his fellow-man; but here is the house where God delighteth to dwell—built of living hearts, all beating with holy love—built of redeemed souls, chosen of the Father, bought with the blood of Christ. The top of it is in heaven. Part of them are above the clouds. Many of the living stones are now in the pinnacle of paradise. We are here below, the building rises, the sacred masonry is heaving, and, as the corner stone rises, so all of us must rise until at last the entire structure from its foundation to its pinnacle shall be heaved up to heaven, and there shall it stand for ever—the new Jerusalem—the temple of the majesty of God.

With regard to this building I have just a remark or two to make before I come to the next point. Whenever architects devise a building they make mistakes in forming the plan. The most careful will omit something; the most clever find in some things he has been mistaken. But mark the church of God; it is built according to rule, and compass, and square, and it shall be found at last that there has not been one mistake. You, perhaps, my dear brother, are a little stone in the temple, and you are apt to think you ought to have been a great one. There is no mistake about that. You have but one talent; that is enough for you. If you had two you would spoil the building. You are placed perhaps in a position of obscurity, and you are saying, “Oh that I were prominent in the church!” If you were prominent you might be in a wrong place; and but one stone out of its place in architecture so delicate as that of God, would mar the whole. You are where you ought to be; keep there. Depend on it there is no mistake. When at last we shall go round about her, mark her walls, and tell her bulwarks, we shall each of us be compelled to say, “How glorious is this Zion!” When our eyes shall have been enlightened, and our hearts instructed, each part of the building will command our admiration. The topstone is not the foundation, nor does the foundation stand at the top. Every stone is of the right shape; the whole material is as it should be, and the structure is adapted for the great end, the glory of God, the temple of the Most High. Infinite wisdom then may be remarked in this building of God.

Another thing may be noticed, namely, her impregnable strength. This habitation of God, this house which is not made with hands, but is of God's building, has often been attacked, but it has never been taken. What multitudes of enemies have battered against her old ramparts! but they

have battered in vain. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together," but what happened? They came against her, every one of them with mighty men, each man with his sword drawn, but what became of them? The Almighty scattered kings in Hermon like snow in Salmon. As the snow is driven from the mountain side before the stormy blast, even so didst thou drive them away, O God, and they melted before the breath of thy nostrils.

"Then should our souls in Zion dwell,
Nor fear the rage of Rome or hell."

The church is not in danger, and she never can be. Let her enemies come on, she can resist. Her passive majesty, her silent rocky strength, bids them defiance now. Let them come on and break themselves in pieces, let them dash themselves against her, and learn the ready road to their own destruction. She is safe, and she must be safe even unto the end. Thus much then we can say of the structure; it is built by infinite wisdom, and it is impregnable secure.

And we may add, it is glorious for beauty. There was never structure like this. One might feast his eyes upon it from dawn to eve, and then begin again. Jesus himself takes delight in it. So pleased is God in the architecture of his church, that he has rejoiced with his church as he never did with the world. When God made the world he heaved the mountains, and digged the seas, and covered its valleys with grass; he made all the fowls of the air, and all the beasts of the field; yea, and he made man in his own image, and when the angels saw it, they sang together and they shouted for joy. God did not sing; there was no sufficient theme of song for him that was "Holy, holy, holy." He might say it was very good; there was a goodness of fitness about it, but not moral goodness of holiness. But when God built his church he did sing; and that is the most extraordinary passage, I sometimes think, in the whole Word of God, where he is represented as singing;—"Thy Redeemer in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing." Think, my brethren, of God himself looking at his church: and so fair and beautiful is the structure, that he sings over his work, and as each stone is put in its place, Divinity itself sings. Was ever song like that? Oh, come, let us sing, let us exalt the name of God together; praise him who praiseth his church—who hath made her to be his peculiar dwelling-place.

Thus, then, have we in the first place regarded the church as a building.

II. But the true glory of the church of God consists in the fact that she is not only a building, but that she is A HABITATION. There may be great beauty in an uninhabited structure, but there is always a melancholy thought connected with it. In riding through our country, we often come upon a dismantled tower, or castle; it is beautiful, but it is not a thing of joy; there is a sorrowful reflection connected with it. Who loves to see desolate palaces? Who desireth that the land should cast out her sons, and that her houses should fail of tenants? But there is joy in a house lit up and furnished, where there is the sound of men. Beloved the church of God hath this for her peculiar glory, that she is a tenanted house, that she is a habitation of God through the Spirit. How many churches there are that are houses, yet not habitations! I might picture to you a professed church of God; it is built according to square and compass, but its model has been formed in some ancient creed, and not in the Word of God. It is precise in its discipline according to its own standard, and accurate in its observances according to its own model. You enter that church, the ceremony is imposing; the whole service perhaps attracts you for a while; but you go out of that place conscious that you have not met with the life of God there—that it is a house, but a house without a tenant. It may be professedly a church, but it is not a church possessing the indwelling of the Holy One; it is an empty house that must soon be dilapidated and fall. I do fear that this is true of many of our

churches, Established and Dissenting, as well as Romanist. There are too many churches that are nothing but a mass of dull, dead formality; there is no life of God there. You might go to worship with such a people, day after day, and your heart would never beat more quickly, your blood would never leap in its veins, your soul would never be refreshed, for it is an empty house. Fair may be the architecture of the structure, but empty is its storehouse, there is no table spread, there is no rejoicing, no killing of the fatted calf, no dancing, no singing for joy. Beloved, let us take heed, lest our churches become the same, lest we be combinations of men without spiritual life, and consequently houses uninhabited, because God is not there. But a true church, that is visited by the Spirit of God, where conversion, instruction, devotion, and the like, are carried on by the Spirit's own living influences—such a church has God for its inhabitant.

And now we will just turn over this sweet thought. A church built of living souls is God's own house. What is meant by this? I reply, a house is a place where a man solaces and comforts himself. Abroad we do battle with the world: there we strain every nerve and sinew that we may stem a sea of troubles, and may not be carried away by the stream. Abroad, among men, we meet those of strange language to us, who often cut us to the heart and wound us to the quick. We feel that there we must be upon our guard. We could often say, "My soul is among lions. I lie even among those that are set on fire of hell." Going abroad in the world we find but little rest but the day's work done, we go home, and there we solace ourselves. Our weary bodies are refreshed. We throw away the armor that we have been wearing, and we fight no more. We see no longer the strange face, but loving eyes beam upon us. We hear no language now which is discordant in our ears. Love speaks, and we reply. Our home is the place of our solace, our comfort, and our rest. Now, God calls the church his habitation—his *home*. See him abroad; he is hurling the thunderbolt and lifting up his voice upon the waters. Harken to him; his voice breaks the cedars of Lebanon and makes the hinds to calve. See him when he makes war, riding the chariot of his might, he drives the rebellious angels over the battlements of heaven down to the depth of hell. Behold him as he lifteth himself in the majesty of his strength! Who is this that is glorious? It is God, most high and terrible. But see he lays aside his glittering sword; his spear he bears no longer. He cometh back to his home. His children are about him. He taketh his solace and his rest. Yes, think not I venture too far—he shall rest in his lover and he doth do it. He resteth in his church. He is no longer a consuming fire, a terror, and a flame. Now, is he love and kindness and sweetness, ready to hear the prattle of his children's prayer, and the disjointed notes of his children's song. Oh how beautiful is the picture of the church as God's house, the place in which he takes his solace! "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

Furthermore, a man's home is the place where he shows his inner self. You meet a man at the market, he deals sharply with you. he knows with whom he has to deal, and he acts with you as a man of the world. You see him again at home, talking with his children, and you say, "What a different man! I could not have believed it was the same being." Mark, again, the professor in his chair; he is instructing students in science. Mark his sternness as he speaks upon recondite themes. Would you believe that that same man will in the evening have his little one upon his knee, and will tell it childish tales, and repeat the ballads of the nursery? And yet it is even so. See the king as he rides through the street in his pomp; thousands gather round him acclamation rends the sky. With what majestic port he bears himself! He is all king, every inch a monarch, as he towers in the midst of the multitude. Have you seen the kind at home? He is then just like other men; his little

ones are about him; he is on the floor with them in their games. Is this the king? Yes, it is even he. But why did he not do this in his palace?—in the streets? Oh, no, that was not his home. It is in his home that a man unbends himself. Even so with regard to our glorious God: it is in his church that he manifests himself as he does not unto the world. The mere worldling turns his telescope to the sky, and he sees the pomp of God in the stars, and he says, “O God, how infinite art thou?” Devoutly he looks across the sea, and beholds it lashed with tempest, and he says, “Behold the might and majesty of the Deity!” The anatomist dissects an insect, and discovers in every part of it divine wisdom, and he says, “How wise is God!” Ay; but it is only the believer who as he kneels in his chamber can say, “My father made all these,” and then can say, “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” There are sweet revelations which God makes in his church, which he never makes anywhere else. It is there he takes the children to his bosom; it is there he opens his heart, and lets his people know the fountains of his great soul, and the might of his infinite affection. And is it not a sweet thing to think of God at home with his family, happy in the house of his church?

But yet, furthermore, another thought strikes me now. A man's home is the center of all he doth. Yonder is a large farm. Well, there are outhouses, and hay ricks, and barns and the like; but just in the middle of these there is the house the center of all husbandry. No matter how much wheat there may be, it is to the house the produce goes. It is for the maintenance of the household that the husband carries on his husbandry. You may hear the cattle lowing yonder, you may mark the sheep upon the hills, but the fleece cometh home, and the full udders must yield the milk for the children of the house, for the house is the center of all. Every river of industry cometh down towards the sweet soft inland lake of home. Now God's church is God's center? He is abroad in the world, he is busy here and there and everywhere, but to what does all his business tend? To his church. Why doth God clothe the hills with plenty? *For the feeding of his people?* Why is providence revolving? Why those wars and tempests, and then again this stillness and calm? *It is for his church.* Not an angel divides the ether who hath not a mission for the church. It may be indirectly, but nevertheless truly so. There is not an archangel that fulfils the behests of the Most High but really carries the church upon his broad wings, and bears up her children lest they dash their feet against a stone. The storehouses of God are for his church. The depths beneath of hidden treasure, of God's unutterable riches—all these are for his people. There is nothing which he hath from his blazing crown to the darkness that is beneath his throne, that is not for his redeemed. All things must minister and work together for good for the chosen church of God which is his *house*—his daily habitation. I think if you will turn that over and over again, when you are away, you will see there is much in the beautiful fact, that as the house is the center, so is the church the center of everything with God.

One other thought and I will have done. We have heard much talk of late about the French invasion. I shall begin to be alarmed about it when I see it, but certainly not till then. However there is one thing we may say pretty safely. We are many of us peace men and would not like to wield the sword; the first sight of blood would sicken us, we are peaceful beings, we are not for fighting and war. But let the most peaceful man imagine that the invader had landed on our shore that our houses be in danger, and our homes about to be sacked by the foe, our conscientiousness I fear would give way; notwithstanding all we might say about the wrongness of war, I query whether there be a man among us who would not take such weapon as he could find next to hand to repel the enemy. With this for our war cry, “Our hearths and our homes,” we would rush upon the invader, be he who he may or what he may. There is no might so tremendous that it could paralyze our arm; until we were frozen in death we would fight for our home; there would be no command so stern

that it could quiet us; we should break through every band and bond, and the weakest of us would be a giant, and our women would become heroines in the day of difficulty. Every hand would find its weapon to hurl at the invader. We love our homes, and we must and will defend them. Ay, and now lift up your thoughts—the church is God's home, will he not defend it? will he suffer his own house to be sacked and stormed? shall the hearth of divinity be stained with the blood of his children? Shall it be that the church is overthrown, and her battlements stormed, her peaceful habitations given up to fire and sword? No, never, not while God hath a heart of love, and while he calleth his people his own house and his habitation. Come, let us rejoice in this our security; let earth be all in arms abroad, we dwell in perfect peace, for our Father is in the house and he is God Almighty. Let them come on against us, we need not fear, his arm shall fell them, the breath of his nostrils shall blast them, a word shall destroy them, they shall melt away like the fat of rams, as fat of lambs shall they be consumed, into smoke shall they consume away. All these thoughts seem to me naturally to arise from the fact that the church is God's habitation.

III. I was about to show you in the third place, that the church is, by-and-bye, to be GOD'S GLORIOUS TEMPLE. It doth not yet appear what *she* shall be. I have, however, already mentioned this precious fact. The church is rising to-day, and she shall continue to rise until the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and then, when all nations shall call her blessed, and him blessed too—when they shall all say, "Come and let us go up to the house of our God that we may worship him," then shall the church's glory begin. When this earth shall pass away, when all the monuments of empires shall be dissolved and run down in the common lava of the last burning, then shall the church be caught up in the clouds and afterwards be exalted to heaven itself, to become a temple such as eye hath not seen.

And now, brethren and sisters, in conclusion I make these remarks. If the church of God is God's house, what should you and I do? Why we should earnestly seek as being a part of that temple always to retain the great inhabitant. Let us not grieve his Spirit lest he leave his church for awhile; above all let us not be hypocrites lest he never come into our hearts at all. And if the church be God's temple and God's house, let us not defile it. If you defile yourself you defile the church, for your sin if you be a church member is the church's sin. The defilement of one stone in rebuilding virtually mars its perfection. Take care that thou be holy even as he is holy. Let not thine heart become a house for Belial. Think not that God and the devil can dwell in the same habitation. Give thyself wholly to God. Seek for more of his Spirit, that as a living stone thou mayest be wholly consecrated; and never be contort unless thou feelest in thyself the perpetual presence of the divine inhabitant who dwelleth in his church. May God now bless every living stone of the temple. And as for you that as yet are not hewn out of the quarries of sin, I pray that divine grace may meet with you, that you may be renewed and converted, and at last be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light.

The Ceremony of Laying the First Stone of the New Tabernacle

FOR THE CONGREGATION OF THE REV. C.H. SPURGEON

Took Place

On Tuesday, August 16th, 1859.

(No. 268-270)

PRECISELY at two o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. SPURGEON, accompanied by Sir MORTON PETO, Bert., M.P., and other friends, ascended the temporary platform erected around the stone; and the proceedings shortly after commenced by singing the hundredth Psalm:—

Before Jehovah's awful throne
 Ye nations bow with sacred joy;
 Know that the Lord is God alone;
 He can create, and he destroy.
 We are his people, we his care,
 Our souls and all our mortal frame;
 What lasting honors shall we rear,
 Almighty Maker, to thy name?
 We'll crowd thy gates with thankful songs,
 High as the heavens our voices raise;
 And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
 Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise.
 Wide as the world is thy command;
 Vast as eternity thy love;
 Firm as a rock thy truth must stand,
 When rolling years shall cease to move.

Mr. SPURGEON then offered up an opening Prayer:— OH! LORD God! thy throne is in heaven. Yet heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, neither can any among the sons of men build a house for thy habitation and thy rest. The temple of Solomon, however beautiful for situation glorious for its splendor, and “exceeding magnificent,” was not fit for thy dwelling place. It is not possible that thou who fillest immensity, thou who dwellest in light to which no man can approach, shouldst confine thyself to temples piled with human hands. Nevertheless thou hast said, “To this man also will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word.” Jesus, Master of assemblies, where two or three are gathered together in thy name, there art thou in the midst of them. Blessed Comforter, without thy quickening influence, the largest congregation is but a listless crowd, the most gorgeous cathedral but a profane place. Thou hast been pleased, O Lord, to increase this people and to multiply their joy. We have had the joy of harvest, and the shoutings as of them that tread the wine-press. Thou hast been greatly with us, and thy right arm has been made bare in the eyes of all the people. And now behold, this day we are come together to lay the first stone of a house for thee, wherein we may meet for thy sacred worship. Oh, give us the first drops of a shower of mercy! Oh that this day every one concerned in the laying of this stone may partake of the blessing of the Most High! Bless the church that shall assemble in it! “May we find our richest expectations far exceeded, and our firmest hopes far

excelled. Do thou, O God, bless the many thousands that we hope will gather here, and grant that the Word may be quick and powerful to their conversion! We know that places cannot be consecrated; yet can there be consecrated associations connected with them. Lord give us the fullness of thy blessing at the beginning, and as we progress, and stone mounts on stone, may we come at last to know that better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereon God bless thy servant who is about to lay this first stone! We thank thee for him, and we pray thee bless him abundantly. Grant that the wealth and station thou hast conferred upon him may be ever, as they have been, fully consecrated unto thee. And do thou bless all the dear brethren of the ministry now present! Oh, grant to every one of them the fullness of thy Spirit, the joy of thy salvation, and the light of thy countenance! And bless, we beseech thee, the assembled congregation! This very day may sinners be converted and God be glorified! And now, thou who dost bow thine ear to listen to our requests, hearken to our prayer, while we beseech thee to let this house be builded without accident, let, or hindrance. When builded may it by the manifestation of thy presence to the saints be filled with thy glory. And for many years to come, yea until thy second advent, thou long-expected Messiah, may ministers of a full, free, and finished salvation, occupy its pulpit! And unto Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be glory, for ever! Amen.

Mr. SPURGEON then said: Before the stone is laid the deacons of the church—or rather my esteemed brother Mr. Carr on their behalf—Has drawn up a statement of the history of this church. I was afraid that our revered brothers in the deaconship would scarcely be heard. Mr. Carr, however is the author of the statement to be laid before you, and he will therefore most properly read it himself. I can only say, if you are as much edified and delighted in hearing it read, as I was when I first perused it, you will not feel occasion for regret even though it should occupy twenty minutes in its reading. I have no fault to find with it, except I think it gives me a little too much praise. If you think so, ascribe it all to God. His praise can never be uttered in strains too loud or too hearty.

The following statement was then read by Mr. B. W. CARR:—

WITH THE REMEMBRANCE OF GRATEFUL ANNALS IN THE PAST, WITH THE TOKENS OF ABUNDANT PROSPERITY IN THE PRESENT, WITH GLOWING HOPES AND DEVOUT PRAYERS FOR THE FUTURE, WE ASSEMBLE THIS DAY TO LAY THE FOUNDATION STONE OF A NEW TABERNACLE.

THIS church of baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is not of recent formation. Its members hold a direct succession from progenitors in the faith, for the space of two hundred and seven years. The oldest Baptist church in Southwark, we trace back our Commencement to the year 1652. After the death of King Charles the First, and before the appointment of Oliver Cromwell to be Protector of the Commonwealth, our pious ancestors first associated in church fellowship. Their spiritual compact was made in troublous times. While the trammels of Popery had then recent been cast off, and Protestant Christians had but lately emerged from Papal darkness, full liberty of conscience was neither granted by the legislators, nor understood generally by the people. The GREAT PRINCIPLE OF UNRESTRICTED RELIGIOUS LIBERTY was, at that time, peculiar to the Baptists. They scrupulously maintained it, and pioneered the way for its popular apprehension. But the sect of Baptists was accounted schismatic. Their meetings were held by stealth. Being unlawful for them to gather together for worship in a suitable edifice, they were compelled to go from house to house, observing the strictest secrecy. From Psalmody they were obliged to refrain. They dared not sing the praises of God, lest the sounds of their devotion should attract the notice of informers. Persecution, in truth, they did not court, neither did they shrink from enduring it with

gentle patience and holy boldness, when public indignation was aroused, and legal indictments preferred against them. Benjamin Keach, one of the earliest pastors of this church, was convicted of asserting and publishing his belief, *that believers only, and not infants ought to be baptized—that laymen, having abilities, might preach the gospel—and, that Christ should reign personally on earth in the latter day.* In accordance with the verdict obtained and the sentence pronounced by the judge, he was imprisoned for fourteen days, fined twenty pounds, and stood in the pillory twice during one week, in the market-places of Aylesbury and Winslow, in the County of Buckinghamshire.

The times have changed—the gradual enlightenment of the public mind has advanced—the face of the local district in which our various meeting-houses were situated has been transformed—the affinity of Christian denominations has become more truly felt—and the broad relation of all parties, whatever their religious opinions, to the general state of the kingdom, has been recognized by the ruling powers, while amidst the flowing tide of civilization, our beloved church, in connection with the sect to which it belongs, has maintained its original character. Owning but one rule of faith—the pure unadulterated Scriptures; recognizing the order of government or discipline no other standard than the example and precept of the apostles as contained in the New Testament, without alloy of tradition or modification, under fresh phases of secular estate, the old creed has been endorsed by each successive generation of believers, and is held intact by those, who this day are gathered to transmit the testimony they have received to a posterity yet unborn.

No novelty whatever led to the distinctness of our communion. No factious spirit induces us to perpetuate it. As a protest against an innovation still fostered in Christian churches, we preserve the inscription of “Baptist” on our banners. By “immersion” the converts to Jesus in apostolic times made their public profession. In Godly and pious communities of the one church of Christ, the primitive ordinance of discipleship has been practiced through an unbroken succession. Holding in common with brethren of other denominations the unity of the *faith*, we desire now, as ever, in our own fellowship, to maintain the pureness of that *polity*, which is formed upon the model of the church at Jerusalem.

Within the first half century of its history, this church had three Pastors—WILLIAM RIDER, BENJAMIN KEACH, and BENJAMIN STINTON.

Under WILLIAM RIDER the church was formed of a few individuals who had separated from one of the most ancient congregations of Baptists in the city of London. They had the reputation of being a people of solid judgment and substantial religion. Some of them were in good circumstances as to the possessions of this world. Mr. Rider died in the year 1667, after having taken the oversight of this infant church for fifteen years.

BENJAMIN KEACH, chosen to the pastorate in the year 1668, was a man famous in his day. He was born at Stokehaman in Buckinghamshire, in February, 1640, and when eighteen years of age was called to the solemn work of the ministry. In controversy on the Baptismal question, the renowned Richard Baxter was his great antagonist. Distinguished for literary research and voluminous writing, he contributed forty-three books to the Christian public, two of which—his “KEY TO OPEN SCRIPTURE METAPHORS,” and his “EXPOSITION OF ALL THE PARABLES,—have been perpetuated in several editions, and take rank in the libraries of the Christian student to this day. During his time the church was prosperous, and a large and commodious building was erected in Goat’s Yard Passage, Fair Street, Horseliedown. There he continued his ministry till the period of his decease in 1704, having completed thirty-six years of arduous ministerial labor.

After an interval of a few months, BENJAMIN STINTON, the son-in-law of Benjamin Keach, succeeded to the pastorate, which he faithfully discharged for fourteen years. Not lacking in that indefatigable industry which has been ever characteristic of the ministers of this church, he first projected a plan of the Baptist history. The manuscript is still preserved, although it devolved upon other hands to complete the interesting work. It is further notable that in his time a baptistry was constructed "for the more decent administration of the ordinance." The Baptists had, like the Christians in Primitive times, administered this rite in pools or rivers. In the year 1818, at the cost of one hundred and sixty pounds, a desirable change was effected, the *old baptizing place* in Horeliedown being enlarged, a meeting-house built, and three vestries of eleven feet square each being provided. The year following Mr. Stinton died.

Through the singular providence and blessing of God, this church was subsequently favored with the ministry of two eminent servants of Christ for the protracted space of one hundred and fifteen years; Dr. John Gill having been upwards of fifty-two years, and his successor more than sixty-three years their pastor.

JOHN GILL was born at Kettering in Northamptonshire, November 23rd, 1697, and ordained to the pastoral office over this church, March 22nd, 1720, being then in the twenty-third year of his age. A man of profound learning and deep piety, he was notable as a divine for the exactness of his systematic theology in which he maintained the doctrines of grace against the innovations of Arminian teachers. His "BODY OF DIVINITY" has long been held in the highest repute. As the fervent exposition of an entire and harmonious *creed*, it has no rival. His famous treatise entitled "THE CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH," obtained for him the championship of the Calvinistic School of Divinity. He likewise published a voluminous "COMMENTARY ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES" in nine volumes folio, remarkable for the copiousness of its glossary, the brilliance of its argument, his apprehension of prophecy, and the richness of his Hebrew scholarship. His preparations for the pulpit having, as is well known, furnished the materials for the press, we can but reflect on the priceless value of his ministry. The eulogy pronounced upon him by the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, a well-known cotemporary divine of the Church of England, was doubtless well merited. He says, "that his labors were indefatigable, his life exemplary, and his death comfortable if any one can be supposed to have trod the whole circle of human learning, it was this great and eminent person. His attainments, both in abstruse and polite literature, were equally extensive and profound, and so far as the distinguishing doctrines of grace are concerned, he never besieged an error which he did not force from its stronghold, nor ever encountered an adversary whom he did not baffle and subdue."

In the year 1757, a new meeting house for the church and congregation was built in Carter Lane, Tooley Street, which Dr. Gill opened on the 9th of October in that year, "by recording the name of the Lord therein," agreeably to his own apprehension of that devout service, "preaching the doctrines of the grace of God, and administering gospel ordinances as they have been delivered to us." This venerable servant of Christ fell asleep in Jesus the 14th October, 1771.

"Though we have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have we not many fathers," but John Gill was a father of the true apostolic order. When this hoary old saint, bending with mature age, was gathered in, and came to his grave "like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season," there sprung up in his place a stripling youth, like a green blade, and so forestalled another summer season, with a fresh crop of souls as precious grain for a future harvest. A lapse of less than two years in point of time divided the ministry of Dr. Gill from that of Dr. Rippon. But the interval in

a moral aspect looked rather wide just then to the eyes of those who saw the pulpit vacated by the one and occupied by the other. Of this no one was more sensible or more apprehensive than young John Rippon himself. Once and again he shrunk from accepting the solemn charge under an overwhelming sense of its responsibilities. Making the invitation a matter of daily prayer, he sought fresh proof that he had found favor with God and acceptance with his people, before returning an absolute and decisive answer.

Born at Tiverton in Devonshire, on April 29th, 1751, JOHN RIPPON was in his twenty-third year when publicly ordained, on November 11th, 1773, to the pastoral office in connection with this church at Carter Lane Chapel. It had already appeared that the mantle of a true ministerial succession had fallen on him; the anointings of the Spirit of God had been fully manifested when by the laying on of hands he received the open recognition of his brethren. This thing came of the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, and he wrought mightily by his dear young servant. A great revival ensued. Crowded congregations at the usual services, and joyful church meetings to receive the converts into fellowship, gave evidence that "the good hand of our God strengthened the hands of the brethren for the good work." For nearly fifty years Dr. Rippon was considered to be one of the most popular ministers in London of the Baptist denomination. Pure in doctrine, and pungent in style, his discourses were sound and savoury. In preaching the gospel, he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, zealous of good works, he failed not to exhort and rebuke with all authority, knowing the dispensation that was committed unto him. His lot being cast in times far different from those his predecessors had ever known, he diligently sought out opportunities, and heartily applied his energies to the wide diffusion of the gospel of Christ. Itinerant societies for the work of evangelising in this country, and the Missionary Association for sending forth the word of life to heathen lands, specially engaged his heart, his counsel, and his co-operation. As the editor of the "Baptist Register," he kept up an extensive correspondence with Christians in all parts of the world. He enjoyed a high influence in his own denomination, and acquired great esteem in other sections of the church of Christ. His selection of hymns has had a wide circulation both in the British Empire and the United States of America, aiding the devotions and inspiring the praises of myriads of our fellow-Christians, nor has it yet been superseded by any volume that can rival it in popularity. In the strange and inscrutable providence of God he was permitted to survive his usefulness, but while the infirmities of age paralysed his ministerial powers, he kept the faith and maintained the unblemished reputation of a Christian to the hour of his departure, which occurred on the 17th December, 1836, in the eighty-sixth year of his age.

There yet remain among us a few members of this church, who recollect *the dear old Doctor* in the vigor of his middle age, and in our memories, the urbanity and warm-heartedness of his private manners are as fondly cherished, as the glowing zeal of his public ministrations. If his life has not left behind it such massive and enduring monuments *on earth* as that of his predecessor, we doubt not that he hath full as many trophies *in heaven*. These men of God, each of them filled his allotted sphere. Gill shone more like a star of the first magnitude amidst surrounding darkness: Rippon was one of a splendid galaxy. The luminous association in which he stood rendering his individuality less conspicuous when viewed from a distance. "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days," and we adore thee O God for it. Our eyes have beheld greater things, and our hearts are lifted up to thy throne for a more copious blessing. "Let thy works appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of

the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

An important event in our history as a church occurred during the closing years of Dr. Rippon's life. On Lord's day, the 7th of February, 1830, the church and congregation assembled to worship God for the last time at the old meeting-house in Carter Lane, previously to its being given up to the Corporation of the City for the approaches to the new London Bridge. For three years were we compelled to seek accommodation from the kindness of other churches, at various times assembling in different buildings. This was a grievous affliction. At length in answer to many an earnest prayer, we were directed by the kindness of our heavenly Father to a piece of freehold ground in New Park Street, where a neat chapel was built, and opened free from any debt or encumbrance on the 6th of May, 1833. Still did fresh anxieties beset our path. For when we had secured a permanent home for worship, we were constrained to seek temporary supplies for the pulpit, our pastor being totally disabled from further service. In reviewing our troubles, we do but recount God's mercies, for the Lord hath delivered us out of them all.

During the eighteen years that ensued after Dr. Rippon's death, three pastors successively accepted office and removed from among us. This was a new experience in our annals. Hitherto each servant of God who had been ordained over this church in the Lord, continued unto his death in its fellowship.

For two years and a half from December, 1837, to July, 1840, the Rev. JOSEPH ANGUS ministered with considerable success. His piety and his talents commended him to our regard, and his youth scoured for him our tender sympathy. We received him with the heartiest welcome, we parted from him with deep regret. He received more than a hundred and twenty members into our communion, and increased the attendance on the public services. The institutions in connection with the church flourished under his presidency. It is worthy of record that at his suggestion the communion of the Lord's supper was made available in this church to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have not been baptized by immersion. At the earnest call of the Baptist Missionary Society, he resigned his charge to take the office of secretary and now fills the responsible trust of theological tutor in the college at Regent's Park for the training of young ministers.

For about eight years and a half from January, 1842, to June, 1850, the Rev. JAMES SMITH, of Cheltenham, was our pastor. Under his ministry the hearts of the people were often moved, and the pool of baptism often stirred. Feeling that London air was unsuited to his health, and provincial labors had superior charms for his soul he resigned his charge, and returned to the scene of his early labors, not without leaving behind him many grateful reminiscences, and many gratifying fruits of the divine blessing on the testimony he was enabled to deliver.

For a short period of less than two years the Rev. WILLIAM WALTERS, now of Halifax, took the oversight of the church, acceding to an unanimous invitation, given him in July 1851, and retiring in the month of April, 1853.

By reason of these frequent changes, the church had become beyond measure unsettled, the number in attendance on Lord's days being greatly diminished. There remained however a faithful band, who besieged the throne of grace with much earnestness. The prayer-meetings on Monday evening continued to give evidence that these who were absent on the first day of the week, had not ceased to hope that the Lord would revive his work among us.

In December, 1853, our present pastor, by a surprising providence, was first invited to occupy the pulpit of our chapel for one Sunday. Having been born on the 19th of June, 1834, he was then

only in his twentieth year. His preaching at once gave signs of singular attraction. And on his repeating his visits to the metropolis, each occasion witnessed the increasing interest his ministry excited. In January, 1854, he accepted the invitation to supply the pulpit for six months, three months of which only had expired when he was unanimously elected to the pastorate.

The antecedents of many generations, and the cherished reminiscences of the older members, prepared for the Rev. CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON that enthusiastic welcome with which he was spontaneously hailed by this church. From the day he commenced his labors in our midst, it pleased the Lord our God to grant us a revival which has steadily progressed ever since. Among the earliest additions to our number, there were not a few disciples of Christ, who, after making a profession under faithful ministers long ago departed to their rest, had wandered about and found no settled home. Many such were gathered into the fold of our fellowship. Here their souls have been restored, while they have found the presence of the Good Shepherd, who maketh us to lie down in green pastures and leadeth us beside the still waters. But the greater work was that of conversion. So did the Holy Ghost accompany the preaching of the gospel with divine power, that almost every sermon proved the means of awakening and regeneration to some who were hitherto "dead in trespasses and sins." Thus our church became an asylum for the aged, as well as a nursery for the babes of our Saviour's family. Before the year had expired, the limited accommodation at New Park Street Chapel for the multitude that gathered at every service rendered it necessary to enlarge the building. As a suitable place for worship during the alterations, the large room at Exeter Hall, in the Strand, was engaged for seventeen Lord's days, from the 11th of February to the 27th of May, 1855. By this step our pastor's fame became widely extended. The crowd that beset the doors long before the hours of service impeded the public thoroughfare. Frequent paragraphs in the newspapers helped to make the preacher notorious. Slander after slander grieved his tender heart; but the grace poured into his lips by his Master, for the reclaiming of sinners (some of whom were of the most abandoned order) afforded him the richest cordial. On our return to the enlarged chapel, we soon discovered that the place was too strait for us, and in the summer of 1856, we again availed ourselves for a few months of the superior accommodation at Exeter Hall, on Sunday evenings. In the autumn of that year, we arranged to hire the larger and more commodious hall of the Royal Surrey Gardens, for the Sunday morning service. This arrangement has been continued for nearly three years. Much of God's good providence is to be clearly recognised in thus causing us to wander. Our dilemma forced upon us a precedent, which others have followed, much to the furtherance of the gospel—to God be ascribed the glory! The prejudice against entering a Nonconformist sanctuary has in many instances been laid aside by those who have convened within the walls of an edifice, that is justly accounted neutral ground; it being sacred or profane according to the temporary use it is made to serve. Every week has borne testimony to the saving influence of the gospel, as it is there constantly proclaimed to an assembly of five thousand persons. Still, with so large a family and so small a dwelling-house, the inconvenience of a temporary lodging becomes more and more grievously felt. There is, and has been for the past two years, as fair an average of that large congregation, who are devout persons, and regular attendants as in any sanctuary in London. Yet not one-third of them can find a place under the same ministry for more than one service during the week. The church-members far exceed the extent of accommodation in our own chapel to provide all of them with sittings. It is only by having two distinct services that we can admit our communicants to the table of the Lord. The necessity therefore for the undertaking that we assemble to inaugurate, must be perceived by all. Every attempt to trace the popular demand

for Evangelical teaching to spasmodic excitement has failed. The pastor of New Park Street Church has never consciously departed from the simple rule of faith recorded in the New Testament. The doctrines he has set forth are identical with those which have been received by godly men of every section of the church since the days of the apostles. The services of religion have been conducted without any peculiarity or innovation. No musical or Esthetic accompaniments have ever been used. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty. The history of our progress for fire years is patent to the world. The example has been found capable of successfully stimulating other churches in their aggressive efforts to save perishing souls. With earnest individual and united prayer, each step, has been taken. And to the exclusive honor and praise of our God, our stone of Ebenezer is this day laid.

Pastor.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON.

Deacons.

SAMUEL GALE.

GEORGE WINSOR.

JAMES LOW.

WILLIAM P. OLNEY.

THOMAS OLNEY.

GEORGE MOORE.

THOMAS COOK.

London,

August 16th, 1859.

Mr. SPURGEON: In the bottle which is to be placed under the stone we have put no money—for one good reason, that we have none to spare. We have not put newspapers, because, albeit we admire and love the liberty of the press, yet that is not so immediately concerned in this edifice. The articles placed under the stone are simply these;—the Bible, the Word of God—we put that as the foundation of our church. Upon this rock doth Christ build the ministration of his truth. We know of nothing else as our standard. Together with this we have put the old Baptist Confession of Faith, which was signed in the olden times by Benjamin Keach whose name is in this book. We put also the *declaration of the deacons* which you have just heard read printed on parchment. There is also an edition of Dr. Rippon's Hymn Book, published just before he died; and then, in the last place, there is a Programme of this day's proceedings. I do not suppose that the New Zealander who one day is to sit on the broken arch of London Bridge will make much out of it. If we had put gold and silver there, it is possible he might have taken it back to New Zealand with him: but I should not wonder, if ever England is destroyed, these relics will find their way into some museum in Australia or America, where they will spell over some of our oldfashioned names, and wonder who ever those good men could be who are inscribed here, as James Low, Samuel Gale, Thomas Olney, Thomas Cook, William Olney, George Winsor, and the like. And I think they will say, "Oh depend upon it, they were some good men or others, and they have put them in stone there." They are living stones indeed they have served this church well and long. Honour to whom honor is due. I am glad to put their names with mine here; and I hope we shall live together for ever in eternity.

The Ceremony of laying the First Stone was then performed in the customary manner by Sir S. M. Peto, amidst the loud acclamation of the Spectators.

Sir MORTON PETO then addressed the assembly as follows:—My Christian friends, I congratulate my excellent friend Mr. Spurgeon, the deacons, the church, and all our friends assembled on this interesting event. It is one to which you have looked forward for some time. It is the commencement of an edifice in which we must hope that the era of much usefulness inaugurated with his ministry will be continued, and largely increased. That admirable paper which was read before the stone was laid, gave you a succinct, but interesting account of the church up to the present time. We must hope that those glories which have been so remarkably shown in the earlier history of the church, may not only be continued in the salvation of a larger number than has ever yet been known, but that in years to come those glories may be largely increased, and that all who live may have the happiness of feeling that the work which has been begun to-day, was one which the Lord had eminently blessed. It is well, dear Christian friends, in the commencement of any large undertaking, to look warily and see whether we are warranted in what we are about to attempt. I could not but feel, during the reading of that paper; that the fact there stated that the church at Park Street is larger at the present time than can be accommodated in the building, that there is practically no room in the chapel for the world, is one which to every Christian heart, must show that there remained nothing but for the church here to arise and build. I know it may be said, that the Music Hall, and other large places, might have given our friend Mr. Spurgeon an opportunity of making known the unsearchable riches of Christ, but then there are other institutions in connection with an edifice of this kind, which are of equal importance with that to which I have referred. We have not only the assembly of the church within its walls, but we must have an opportunity of gathering the young for instruction; and when we look to the fact that this new edifice will accommodate above two thousand Sunday-school children, and also place nearly five thousand people in the position of hearing the gospel of Christ, we not only feel that the world will be accommodated to hear, and the church amply provided for, but the young will be trained up in the path in which they should go. Then I rejoice, dear Christian friends, to know that this church, though strictly denominational, is in no respect Sectarian. Believing, as its members justly do, that there is no other mode of baptism than that which is figuratively set forth in Scripture by “being buried with Christ in baptism:” while I am sure, my friend Mr. Spurgeon will never, in coming across this truth (as he does not in regard to any other) compromise its due weight, or give it more than fitting prominence that the congregations may hear the simple gospel; yet on all occasions, when the claims of Christian usefulness are to be promoted, I am quite sure the church will be rejoiced to lend this edifice to any, not only of the denomination to which we are so ardently attached, but to any other evangelical denomination that may ask it at your hands. Then, dear Christian friends, let all the denominations feel that if this is to be a metropolitan building, it has large claims on them. While you have a large and a heavy burden, which you are delighted to bear, because it is only one of those things which enable you to evidence your love to Christ, and one of those things which do so much good in stimulating exertion, yet I cannot but feel that my friend Mr. Spurgeon, and the deacons have a very strong claim on all other churches of the metropolis and of the kingdom at large. And I trust that this will be increasingly felt, and that you will have the happiness of doing as good Dr. Rippon did. When my excellent friend, Mr. Spurgeon—as I have no doubt he will if spared, (and I trust he will be spared)—opens this place, and declares the full, free, and finished gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as the basis of his ministry to come, as it has been the basis of his ministry past—that it will be in a chapel free from debt. I know there is no testimony which his loving heart would so freely acknowledge, as that testimony to himself, or rather to his Lord through him, which would enable

him to feel when he first ascends the pulpit of this new chapel, I am here speaking the gospel to a people who are assembled in an edifice which has no claim whatever to discharge. Now, dear Christian friends, I can but hope that my excellent and dear friend, Mr. Spurgeon, may be something like those two worthies of whom we heard—that he and the one who is to succeed him may occupy the century between them. I only hope that my friend's will be the larger half. I hope and believe that whenever the time comes, he will not allow his increasing years to give an evidence that he desires to occupy a position which he is no longer able to fill, but I am perfectly assured of this, that the divine blessing which has so richly manifested itself in the ministry of his youth, will enable him to feel with advancing years the truth of the promise, and that he will find that he who goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall find even to the hoariest age, that he will return bringing his sheaves with him. Accept my hearty congratulations on this event, my hearty prayers that every wish of yours may be more than abundantly realised in an the future; that my excellent and dear friend, Mr. Spurgeon and his deacons may not only live to see this house completed without accident, but that they and you occupying it together, may have what after all is of the greatest importance, a rich baptism of that divine influence, without which all that we undertake is worthless. Dear Christian friends, I thank you most heartily for having permitted me the honor of occupying this position on this occasion; and I earnestly desire that as brethren and sisters in Christ, you may find that what we have begun, may be accomplished to your joy, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Mr. SPURGEON: My dear friends, this is not the first time that I have borrowed light from Sir Morton Peto. I have often cheered the darkness of a long railway journey, by a most excellent lamp of his own manufacture, which he kindly presented to me, that I might see to read by it as I was traveling. I am very glad to see him blazing forth again today. In the light of his countenance many of us have been made glad. It is my earnest prayer that while God is pleased to bless him with wealth, and rank, and influence, he may find it quite as easy to serve his God in the future as he has done in the past. We owe him much as Dissenters for his great zeal and wisdom in having brought through the House of Commons an Act whereby our chapels are well secured to us. I pray that God may give him grace every day that he may know his own title to the kingdom of heaven to be clearer and clearer as years come upon him. May his course be like that of the sun, which goeth forth in his strength and stayeth not till the full blazing noon. And now I have to say a few words to you this afternoon with regard to this great edifice. I never answer any slanders against myself, and very seldom answer any questions about what I mean to do. It is always enough for me to have my own approbation; I always feel perfectly satisfied with the approval of my own conscience without that of anybody else, and when I have done wrong it is always enough for me to have the condemnation of my own heart. I find that I am obliged to be a self contained man, just going on my way, and letting other people do the same. If I am wrong I will be accountable to my own Master, but to no flesh living or breathing; and if I am right the day will tell it. God knows how true are my intentions even when I may have acted most foolishly. "This place," I said some time ago, when our brethren were half afraid, "is to be built, and it will be built, and God will fill it with his presence" There is no doubt whatever about the money being obtained. I scarcely know that I have asked an individual to give anything, because I have such a solid conviction that the money must come. I suppose that out of all that is now in our hands I have collected more than half myself in preaching, and that is the way I dare say the larger part of the rest will come, through the kindness of the provincial and metropolitan churches who have almost all treated me with the

noblest generosity. I give this day my hearty thanks to all that have helped me; and I do not know but what I may as well add to all that have not helped me. They many of them mean to do so, and so I will thank them beforehand. There is one gentleman here to-day who is going to make a speech, after Brother Dowson shall have addressed you. I think (albeit that he can speak admirably well,) the best part of his speech will be made with his hand, for he has three thousand pounds with him to give as a noble donation from an aged servant of Christ, long sick and confined to his house but who loves Christ's ministers and desires to help Christ's cause. He would not like me to mention his name, and therefore I shall not do it. And now, my dear friends, as to the place to be erected here. I have a word or two to say with regard to *its style*, with regard to *its purposes*, and with regard to *our faith and our promise*. It is to me a matter of congratulation that we shall succeed in building in this city a Grecian place of worship. My notions of architecture are not worth much, because I look at architecture from a theological point of view, not from an architectural one. It seems to me that there are two saved languages in the world. There was the Hebrew of old, and I doubt not that Solomon adopted Jewish architecture—a Hebrew form and fashion of putting stones together in harmony with the Hebrew faith. There is but one other sacred language—not Rome's mongrel tongue: glorious were that for a battle cry, but of no use for the preaching of the gospel—the Latin! There is only one other sacred language, the Greek, and that is dear to every Christian's heart. Our fullest revelation is in that tongue; our noblest names for Jesus. The very epitome and standard of our faith is Greek; and this place is Grecian. I care not that many an idol temple has been built after the same fashion. So it may have been that Abraham and the ancient Hebrews may have carried their architecture from some heathen temple in Ur of the Chaldees. Greek is the sacred tongue, and Greek is the Baptist's tongue. We may be beaten in our own version sometimes, but in the Greek never. Every Baptist place should be Grecian—never Gothic. We owe nothing to the Goths as religionists. We owe our Scriptures to the Grecian language; and a Grecian place shall this be; and God give us the power and life of that master of the Grecian language, the apostle Paul, that here like wonders may be done by the preaching of the Word. As for our faith as a church you have heard that already. We believe in what are called the five great points commonly known as Calvinistic; but we do not regard those five points as being barbed shafts which we are to push into the bowels of Christendom. We look upon them as being five great lamps which help to irradiate the cross, or rather five bright emanations springing from the glorious covenant of our Triune God, and illustrating the great doctrine of Jesus crucified. Against all comers, especially against all lovers of Arminianism, we defend and maintain pure gospel truth. At the same time I can make this public declaration, that I am no Antinomian. I belong not to the sect of those who are afraid to invite the sinner to Christ. I warn him, I invite him, I exhort him. Hence, then, I have contumely on either hand. Inconsistency is urged by some, as if anything that God commanded could be inconsistent. I will glory in such inconsistency even to the end I bind myself precisely to no form of doctrine. I love those five points as being the angles of the gospel, but then I love the center between the angles better still. Moreover, we are Baptists, and we cannot swerve from this matter of discipline, nor can we make our church half-and-half in that matter. The witness of our church must be one and indivisible. We must have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. And yet dear to our hearts is that great article of the Nicene Creed, the "Communion of Saints." I believe not in the communion of Episcopalians. I do not believe in the communion of Baptists. I dare not sit with them exclusively. I think I should be almost strict communicant enough not to sit with them at all, because I should say, "This is not the communion of saints, it is the communion of Baptists." Whosoever loves the

Lord Jesus Christ in verity and truth hath a hearty welcome, and is not only permitted, but invited to communion with the Church of Christ. However, we can say with all our hearts, that difference has never lost us one good friend yet. I see around me our independent brethren, they certainly have been to Elim to-day, for there has been much water here; and I see round about me dear strict communion brethren and one of them is about to address you. He is not so strict a communionist but what he really in his own heart communes with the people of God. I can number among my choicest friends many members of the church of England, and some of every denomination under heaven. I glory in that fact. However sternly a man may hold the right of private judgment, he can yet give his right hand with as light a grip to every man that loves Jesus Christ. Now with regard to *our prospects*. We are to build this place, and the prospect I encourage is that it be paid for before it is opened. I think it is likely too; because if we carry out our intention as a committee, we have a notion that if our friends do not give us liberal contributions we will put the carcass up and roof it in, and allow them to come and stand. Those that want seats can buy them. I am sure my people would soon get me a pulpit, and such is the zeal of our brethren that they soon buy me a baptistry. I leave it open for any generous friend here that pleases to do so, to engage to provide some part of the chapel, and say, "I will give that." Churchmen give painted windows, and if some of you agree to give different parts of the chapel, it may be so erected. Understand, our large expenditure is caused partly by the fact that we have immense school rooms under ground, and also a vestry for church-meetings holding between 800 and 900 persons. This is necessary, because our church is of such an immense size, and our members come out to every service if possible. There is no church-edifice in London so well used up as ours. They hack it to pieces. We must build this strong I am sure, for the people are always with us. They love to be at the prayer meetings. There is no people that take out their quarter's seat-money so fully. They say, "We will hear all that we can;" and depend on it, they never give me a chance of seeing the seats empty. But our prospect is, after we have fitted up our vestry, schools, and the like that we shall be able to go on and build other chapels. Now, Sir Morton Peto is the man who looks to build one chapel with the hope it that will be the seedling for another. He has the noblest chance that ever man had for getting this done. We will pretty soon try our hands at it. Our people have taken to chapel-building, and they will go on with it. They built a great chapel that held two thousand persons in Horseliedown for Benjamin Keach; then they built one in Goat Yard; then one in Carter Lane for Dr Rippon, then one in Park Street; and now we have set about building one here. "What are you going to do with Park Street?" it may be asked. Why, my dear friends, we might get out of our difficulties if we were to sell it, but that is what we do not mean to do. Our motto is, "Go forward, and never step back." You know if we were to build one chapel, and sell another, that would be the "goose-step;" there would be no marching, it is merely putting one foot up and the other down, but never getting farther. Belonging to the Presbyterian order, we have elders in our church, as well as deacons, and the presbytery is capable of the widest extension. That church can be held in connection with our own; two preaching elders can preach the Word there, and the church still remain as one—not two churches. God sparing my life, if I have my people at my back I will not rest until the dark county of Surrey be covered with places of worship. I look on this as the beginning of the end. I announce my own schemes: visionary they may appear, but carried out they will be. It is only within the last six months that we have started two churches—one in Wandsworth and the other in Greenwich, and the Lord has prospered them. The pool of baptism has been stirred with converts. And what we have done in two places I am about to do in a third, and we will do it not for the third or the fourth, but for the

hundredth time, God being our helper. I am sure I may make my strongest appeal to my brethren because we do not mean to build this as our nest, and then to be lazy. We must go from strength to strength, and be a missionary church, and never rest until not only this neighborhood, but our country, of which it is said that some parts are as dark as India, shall have been enlightened with the gospel. Now I have laid out a grand scheme, and I have no doubt some of my dear brethren, the ministers of Surrey, especially Dr. Steane, will carry it all out almost before I have begun. We shall be glad whoever may do it so long as it is done. I always try to put my shoulder to everybody else's wheel, though I have got sometimes a little mire on my shoulders as the result of it; but I am ready to go and give a heave at any time if they will only be kind to me on this occasion and lift my wheel out of the mud. After Brother Dowson shall have spoken, and our friend Mr. Inskip, of Bristol, shall have made his three thousand pounds speech, we shall sing a hymn. This gangway will then be cleared, and all persons present will have an opportunity of placing an offering upon the stone. And if any of you would like to try your hand at building with a trowel you can lay a brick or two, or twenty, at a shilling a brick. Some of our friends will pay a guinea a brick to begin with, as they would not like to give less; but you can begin with a shilling a brick afterwards. We shall pay you nothing for the labor, but you will pay us for the privilege of putting bricks into the wall.

The Rev, H. Dowson: I stand here this afternoon, my dear Christian friends, as the representative of thousands of brethren in the North of England, who love the truth, who love you and who love your pastor, and who would be glad to be here today to mingle their Hosannas with your thanksgivings, and to congratulate you, and thank God upon an that is auspicious and triumphant in the proceedings of this day. Notwithstanding the prognostication of enemies, and notwithstanding the fears of halfhearted friends, this tabernacle is now beginning to look like *a great fact*, and we can entertain not the least possible doubt of the success of this enterprise, promoted and devised amidst the liberality and the prayers of the people here. Where God gathers together his sheep, and increases their number, he will surely amplify the fold; and when he gives sinners hearts to hear, and hearts to pray, and hearts to believe, he will give them in his providence a place in which to worship. This is the Lord's doing, brethren. The hand of God has been in this work from the beginning, and I doubt not will conduct to a glorious termination. This vast metropolis of yours is covered in various parts with buildings—institutions of mercy, and hospitals for the relief of almost all the maladies incident to our frail humanity. What is the meaning of this grand edifice which is to fill the place before me? It is to be a hospital, an infirmary for the spiritually diseased. Here the deaf and the dumb, and the halt and the lame and the lepers, are to be assembled together, and they shall be pointed to the great Physician, and they shall be told of the balm of Gilead; and in the midst of it shall be the bath of blood, as well as the bath of baptism; and the bath of blood shall take the precedence of the bath of baptism, for it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin. When I listened to that interesting record and sketch of the history of your church, so fostered by a merciful providence and by a Saviour's care, I could not but rejoice that the same great distinctive principles will be maintained; and that, though there may be a change of position there shall be no change in the doctrines preached and professed. We shall dedicate this sanctuary to the worship of the Trinity—Father Son, and Holy Ghost, we shall dedicate this edifice to the proclamation of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and salvation only through his cross; we shall dedicate this edifice to the doctrine of justification by faith, righteousness imputed, even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus, the doctrine of sovereign grace, the doctrine of the personality and agency

of the Holy Spirit, the precepts of Christ, the ordinances of Christ, and the free proclamation of the gospel to every creature. The trumpet shall give a certain sound, sinners shall hear the sound,

“Their thankful tongues shall own,
That righteousness and strength are found,
In thee the Lord alone.”

As to your future prospects in the removal of this debt; My dear friend and brother Mr. Spurgeon, has said, that if the money be not raised there will be a probability that the place will be left unfinished. I trust it will not be in the position of a place occupied by a venerable predecessor of mine a hundred years ago, when they commenced the Baptist interest in Bradford, in a place galled the Cockpit, and the females carried their stools under their arms, because they had neither forms nor chairs on which to sit. Surely you will not wish this great Tabernacle to be opened under such circumstances. This day the eyes of all the provinces of this country, my brethren, are turned towards you. Many parts of the country—the town from which I come to wit—is waiting to give a response to what you do to-day, and that which you shall in your liberality bestow, will give a tone and influence far and wide amongst the provinces, the hearts of whose inhabitants beat with sympathy for your cause and your enterprise. Brethren, we have laid the foundation of a material edifice. There is a nobler “temple, I need scarcely remind you, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone. This is only a tabernacle; these stones will moulder and decay, or some great convulsion or earthquake hereafter shall heave up the mighty foundations of this stable edifice, but the temple of the living God, of which I hope many of you are living stones, shall stand and stand for ever, the memorial of God’s eternal unchangeable compassion, and his pity for the lost and the guilty. May God bless and prosper you, cause his face to shine upon you, and give you peace evermore. Amen

Mr. INSKIP, of Bristol: My Christian friends, after the trumpet-tongued introductions which my friend and brother Mr. Spurgeon, has given me, I am sure you must expect very large things; but I do hope that you and himself will not go away disappointed by very small things. But, however, large things have their commencement from very small beginnings, and as we see yonder ground covered with the sands of the gravel and the stones about it, and as we see the bricks yonder piled, and contemplate the lime which will have a large number of component particles to combine and unite therewith, the preparation for this building which is to be erected; so it is that we have to look forward from small individual materials, to the consummation of the glorious kingdom of our blessed Lord and Saviour. I have, it is true, to appear before you to-day as the representative but of one, and not of the multitude; but well assured I am, that had my brethren in the West known that I was to come here as a representative, or a delegate at all, they would have sent me well furnished and well armed. And it is only for my brother, Mr. Spurgeon, to make his way to the West, and I know that he will find a very hearty response to his warm appeals. However, the response which I have to make to-day is one which comes from a single heart. It comes from the heart of one who is confined to a sick chamber, and has not seen the outside of the city for some years past. But that chamber is enlivened and enlightened by the bright illumination of the Eternal Spirit. That man’s large wealth and large fortune has been dedicated to his Lord. He numbers eighty-three years of age, and has given away upwards of eighty thousand pounds. And he has sent me here to-day to say he will give you *three thousand pounds* and, what is more, if twenty gentlemen will come forward with one hundred pounds a-piece upon the opening of this chapel, I am prepared to put down twenty hundreds to meet it. “It is not by might, it is not by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord.” These things, as I said, emanate from small beginnings. It was my honor and my privilege

this day three weeks to address a large concourse in laying the foundation stone of a new edifice for the Church of England, in the city of Bristol. The new church for our dear friend and brother, Doudney, is now progressing, through the same gentleman's bounty. There is one thing you will say, "Dear me, he deserves great praise." But he says, "Give me none of it, away with it, away with it, it is fulsome, it is annoying. Lay it upon the head of Immanuel, for he gave it to me. He it is that has induced me thus to give you assistance." It is not for me to laud the man, and therefore I leave him in his solitude—with an earnest prayer which no doubt many of you will reciprocate—that the Lord will bless and grant to him the bright shinings of his countenance in his last declining hours. As regards this building which is about to be erected, it is a matter of considerable delight to me to be able to forward in the least degree the views of my friend Mr. Spurgeon. With much true delight has it been my happiness to hear of many sinners in the West of England having been brought to a knowledge of Christ by his ministry. Let me now ask you earnestly to supplicate that the same blessing may rest upon his labors here, in answer to earnest and incessant prayer—prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit of God who alone is the inspirer of prayer. May the work of conversion proceed! There are many things here to be considered. There are many things to be talked of, but the time would fail me now even to hint at them. I trust by-and-bye, if I should stay to the evening meeting, an opportunity will be afforded me of saying a few words which will be more audible. I leave now others more able to address you than I can possibly be, and I shall be very happy to place on this stone, in accordance with the mission with which I am entrusted, not a painted window, but a printed piece of paper.

The following verses were then sung:—

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall:

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown him lord of all.

Let every kingred, every tribe,

One thus terrestrial ball,

To him all majest ascribe,

And crown him Lord of all.

Numerous donations were then placed upon the stone, after which the assembly separated.

EVENING MEETING

A PUBLIC TEA MEETING was held in the evening in REA'S Repository which was appropriately fitted up for the occasion. About two thousand persons sat down to tea at five o'clock, and at half-past six, the cloth having been removed, and the seats re-arranged, the chair was taken by the Right Hon. the LORD MAYOR.

The Doxology having been sung, the Rev. JOHN SPURGEON (father of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon) offered up prayer as follows:—

OUR Father and our God, we supplicate thy blessing upon us at this time. O may we feel thy presence to be in the midst of us. May we realize thee as a God of love in Jesus Christ, and O do thou send that rich blessing which shall make us all happy and fill our hearts with joy through the precious Saviour who bled and died for us. We thank thee that we have lived to see this happy day. O our Father, may we never forget thy goodness and mercy to us. Accept the free will offerings of thy people, and O may that foundation stone which is laid to-day be blessed by thee, and may that building be erected to thy glory, honor, and praise. May we each be made living stones of that

living temple which is to adorn the world of glory, and may we live there for ever with Jesus Christ. O bless us all; and bless thy young servant. Do thou stand by him and keep him from the mighty foes against whom he has to contend. Keep far from him the influence of sin and Satan, and may he find joy and peace in God. O our Father, keep him, O keep him, let him not be lifted up by what he has seen, or by what thou hast done for him today. Oh do thou keep his soul humble, and then he will always be strong to praise thy great and holy name. Oh, may he draw from that fountain which is full—which runneth over, and may he find that the God of peace and love is continually with him. Bless, his church and congregation, O Father smile upon them. We leave them in thy hands; we seek thy favor and presence with us tonight. Grant, great God, that sinners may be converted unto thee. There are some in thy presence who are but a few steps from the grave, some hastening on to the abyss of woe, walking with the giddy multitude in the way which leads to death and eternal destruction. God save them! Oh, pluck them as brands from the eternal burning! May thine all-sufficient grace turn their hearts, and thy name be glorified! Bless every one now present. Prepare us for this service, accept our song of praise, and fill our hearts with joy, for the dear Redeemer's sake. Amen.

The LORD MAYOR said: My Christian friends, I do not think that it is possible for me to be heard at the extremity of the building, but, if you will have patience with me, I trust I shall be able to get up my voice so that every one shall hear. This is a happy day, a day long to be remembered in the annals of the country, because here to-day, we are permitted to meet in quietness, in order, with the guardians of the peace around us to prevent any disturbance; a proof that civil liberty and religious freedom have made great advances in this country. In former days we had to meet in holes and corners and alleys, but now we can meet in open day in the front of the high road, inviting the assembled public to come and be witnesses of the order of our ceremonies, and to partake of the benefits which are to be derived therefrom. I therefore urge upon all, when they have anything to do with the question of civil and religious liberty, never to give up their efforts until they see it extended far and wide. Our beloved young friend has, through the providence of God, been raised up to gather the largest congregation ever gathered together; he has dispensed the truth as it is in Jesus to thousands upon thousands; and he is a despised—no, an honored Baptist minister. He comes amongst you, not in Episcopal guise, clothed in secular authority, and robed in the habiliments of office, but he comes amongst you a simplehearted man. He comes clothed in the authority of his divine Lord and Master, speaking the truth in simplicity and love, winning, not by human power, but subduing by the power of the gospel. Evidently God has called him to do a great work; and you are the people who ought to love and honor him, esteeming him for his work's sake, and ever protecting him against the calumnies of the world, to prove that he is a true servant of Jesus Christ. I have said you ought to adhere to the principles of civil and religious liberty; but for them you never could have seen the thousands at the laying of the foundation stone; but for them you would not have been gathered together now in peace and safety and an honor be to the men in church or state, who during the past centuries have suffered advocated, bled and died, that you might meet in peace and comfort. Well, when you hear of the assumptions of church authority, remember that if they are not sanctioned by the gospel of Jesus Christ, the world may fight for them, but truth will prevail; and though our Episcopal brethren have the authority of the state, and the wealth of the state, tell them that you envy neither, because you can proceed without the authority of the state, and you can raise money without its power to compel. When they tell you that there is no certainty in the doctrine taught in the Dissenting congregations, that they have no creed, you can reply, they

have a creed—the best, the purest that ever man possessed. Their creed is the Bible. They glory in the saying of one of the churchmen, “The Bible, the Bible, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants.” We stand in an age when Popery is making a large aggression upon the religious liberties of the people—secretly, silently, openly, and boldly. They are anticipating the time when they shall take possession of the cathedrals and churches, and once more dominate over the English people. But religious liberty is safe in your hands. You will endeavor, I am sure, so to hold the word of truth, that it may everywhere prove a barrier against the approaches of error. The Tabernacle which is to rear its walls in the adjoining ground is to be consecrated not by the authority of men, but by the dependence of men upon the teachings of the Holy Spirit. The gospel, and the gospel only, is there to be preached: sinners are to be invited to Christ, and the full sufficiency of his salvation is to be maintained. We do not despise things in their proper order. The ordinances of the church will be respected by its worshippers, and it will be necessary therefore, not only that the gospel should be preached, but that you who hear it are to be “living epistles, seen and read of all men,” of the power, the truth, the purity, the holiness, enjoined by the gospel. It is a solemn charge committed to your trust, and woe be unto you if you neglect the sound, and swerve from the gospel. And then to maintain the gospel it is not only necessary that you should love it and have it, but that you should do all in your power to propagate it everywhere—to rich and to poor, to learned and to unlearned; to all classes and conditions of people the gospel is to be preached. You can preach it as well as your pastor,—he in the pulpit, you in your lives. There are Missionary Societies which will require your aid, and though you tarry at home, you have a power to prevail in earnest supplication before the throne of divine grace, that all the labors you undertake may be blessed. And then you have something else to do with the work at home; the gospel is to be preached in your Tabernacle, but that will not be sufficient, if you do not go abroad, and carry with you the essential principles that you have received, and tell the people that they may see from your walk and conversation, that you have sat under one of the most successful and useful of Christ’s ministers, and that you have learned from him to do your duty to your neighbors. Remember “the poor ye have always with you.” What a blessed and happy thing that is that you have the poor with you and that they are standing monuments by which you may prove your faith in Jesus Christ. Let it not be said, that while ye hear the gospel you have forgotten to practice it. I beg to commend you and your work to the blessing of him who alone can make it prosper. May this be but the beginning of the undertakings throughout the country, where the Dissenting places of worship, like the palaces of our land, may stand as landmarks to prove the onward progress of society, and that among Protestant Dissenters there is loyalty to the Queen, obedience to the laws, a desire to promote the wellbeing of society, and to make this nation blessed, peaceful, and happy, until, as from Zion, the perfection of beauty, the glory of the Lord may shine upon all the earth.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON: I have but a word or two to say with regard to the order of the meeting. I feel myself so extremely ill just now that I must go away for a little time, I nevertheless may say a word or two. There is a large amount of talent here to-night, far more than we can bring out. Here are dozens of ministers, all of whom could speak to edification. I trust none of them will think that any invidious distinction is made when we call upon one and not another. For myself I have this much to say—thanks, thanks to every one. My Lord Mayor, I have to thank you sincerely for your kindness in coming this evening. I hardly expected you, knowing how it has pleased God to lay the heavy hand of affliction upon me I thank God that you are able to come, and I thank you for the will to come. May every blessing rest upon your head, and when earthly honors shall fade

before your eye, may you have the more lasting glories and the eternal splendours which God has prepared for his faithful servants! I have to thank a large number of ministers who are not here for their kind letters; especially must I mention the name of that honored father of all the Dissenting churches, the Rev. John Angell James, of Birmingham. There is no name I think just now that ought to be more venerated than his. Long has he worn the harness, and in the kind letter which he sent me he said his work was done, and he could do but little more to serve his Master. It was just like his humility. I had written to him sometime before expressing my candid opinion concerning him, and my hearty respect; and he told me that I was mistaken in him. I am quite sure that I was not. I know that I could not think too highly of him. My dear friend, Dr. Campbell sent me a note to-day, that he read in the papers that this strike had put off the laying of the first stone. He should have learned by this time, as an editor, to believe nothing he sees in the newspapers unless he himself knows it to be true. I confess I take a tattle time to chew everything I read there; I am not clear upon it the first time I see it. If I were clear upon it, my dear friends, this chapel would need no subscriptions from you. I only wish newspapers would make true what they say about me—not in the abuse line, but with regard to this magnificent fortune which they had the generosity to confer upon me. I mean to distribute the dividends of this fortune among the newspapers, and much good may the share do to each of them. No one has left me a sixpence. The headache and the sickness I now feel almost seem to say that somebody is thinking of doing so. Don't do it. It is the ruin of many ministers. It is no use your giving them money: give them a right good income every year for their preaching. I can say, with regard to that, that I have nothing more to ask, or to desire, but I am afraid that if minister get money they will have the bronchitis, and all the rest of it. It is such a common thing that I hope no one will try me. I say again, I have to thank many who are not here, and then I have to thank the brethren that are here. I did not think there were so many of them that loved me. I do feel quite beaten up to-night I sometimes say some hard things. Well, I shall go on, but they will have no reference to the brethren here, I dare say. I am sure if they think that I should be hard or unkind towards any of them, they do not know me. When all the world abused me I just bent my fist and set my teeth together and said, "I'm a match for you." But no sooner did the papers begin to praise me some little than they brought tears in my eyes, for I began to say, "No, I do not deserve that; I cannot take that credit to myself." If any man wants to make me preach more vigorously than I have against any doctrine, let him abuse me, and the doctrines I preach, and I will soon come out strong upon it, rest assured. The only danger we fear is—being thrown off our guard by success. But this I rejoice to know, wherever God puts his servants they are safe. I have sometimes met with some minister who has an average congregation of fifty, perhaps, whose back was as stiff as possible, and whose neck was never bent, and he has said, "My dear brother, you are in a very dangerous position; I hope you will not be carried away with pride." Poor dear soul! I thought if he had kept his advice to himself it might, perhaps, have been profitable to him. I do feel myself crushed down by the weight of divine mercy; I am bowed to the very earth by it, I know not what to say to you to-night, nor how to express my thoughts and feelings. Glory be to him that hath done all this! May he continue to bless! But even should he stay his hand, if I were laid aside and could never preach again, I feel I have such mercies that I must praise him throughout eternity for what I have received. Again I say, to him be glory! Yet I do thank my kind and loving friends from many a fond expression of affection that I have received this day. Oh, my dear friends, pray for all the ministers of Christ, that God would make them more abundantly useful. Ask for us more liberty in speech, more unction on our heads and in our hearts; ask for us a greater intensity of agony on

account of the souls of men, ask for us greater earnestness in prayer. Pray for us that we may be masters of the sacred art of wrestling with God. Pray for us that a revival of religion may come into this land. What is Ireland that it should have a revival denied to us? What is Scotland that it should be stirred, and we should sleep? God hath blessed this nation first and foremost aforetime—why not now? Let us cry unto him mightily, and he will hear our prayers, and grant us his richest blessing. Before I sit down, I would ask the Lord Mayor kindly to forgive me for being long, but not to let any speaker speak more than ten minutes, as there are so many to address us. Then I want to observe that our dear brother, Mr. Joynson, the second most liberal subscriber to our fund, would have been here, but that he is sore sick, and has had to remove to Teignmouth. I wrote to him, hearing that he was near death's door, and he wrote me a kind reply, saying that he was not so bad as I thought, but he was far too in to come. Pray for him that he may be restored. He is a very prince in Israel in his generosity; he hath served this cause, and may God Almighty bless him! I must also publicly acknowledge my obligations to the Crystal Palace Company for the use of chairs this day. I suppose I did them a good turn once. I did it, however, out of love to those poor creatures who were injured in India, and out of a desire to preach the gospel to the great numbers assembled in that building. Still it was very kind of them so to act. Some places of worship in the neighborhood, have denied us the use of forms and the like; the Crystal Palace Company have kindly done it for us.

The Rev. W. G. LEWIS, of Westbourne Grove. My Lord, ladies, and gentlemen: I have been thinking since the commencement of this meeting, if it were possible, that one or two of the humble Godly folk, who two centuries since assembled with prayers and tears in Horseliedown, to commence an obscure and almost unknown Baptist church could have foreseen the gatherings of this day, and the still further events in the future connected with this Tabernacle, how marvellously overwhelming, how astounding to the sense, how almost beyond the power of their credulity would have been the prospect. Verily, this church connected with New Park Street, has been a chosen object of the divine regard. In the characters of the excellent men of God who have been its pastors, in the wondrous success that they have attained, in the conversion of sinners and the recovery of lost souls to Jesus Christ, its past annals have been truly wondrous, and nothing is certainly more wonderful than that portion of its history which attaches to our beloved brother, Mr. Spurgeon. I beseech you, Christian friend, who are connected with the church as its members, to respond to that appeal which God in his mercy makes to you today, to offer unto him the sacrifices of thanksgiving and of praise. I say that your experience and that of your ancestors demand to-day a tribute of unwonted extent, both as to the feeling of your hearts and as to the action of your hands. It becomes you indeed to remember well those touching, those beautiful annals to which we have listened already, and which I trust the committee in charge of the operations connected with your building, will print and promulgate far and wide. And oh, my dear friends, when I look upon the vast extent of this meeting, and reflect that very seldom, if ever, has there been such a congregation, even in this metropolis upon such an occasion as this, I feel constrained to address my brethren in the ministry also to hear the appeal which God in his providence makes to them, to be faithful, uncompromising, simple, and bold in their declaration of gospel truths. What a marvellous blessing is that which God hath poured out upon this stripling! How has he been pleased as of olden time to select his own instrument where men little thought—to call him forth, and try place him before the eyes not merely of this million-peopled city, but of our whole country, and I trust that when the reports of this day's proceedings have gone forth on the swift wings of the press, the country will feel that Spurgeon and his people are in their hearts, and that they have a claim not merely upon denominations, but

upon all who love the Saviour. The man is national property. They know it on the other side of the Atlantic, and I, as I believe him not to be present, I say it with the greater freedom—Mr. Spurgeon's conduct in relation to that American proposal to procure his labors on the other side of the Atlantic—his noble conduct upon that occasion, wholly in harmony with all the other acts of his public career, demands some acknowledgment from the Christians of England. He might have money enough for his Tabernacle if he would stoop to the course that men of the world would dictate. Before my ten minutes have elapsed, I must be allowed to ask the members of Mr. Spurgeon's church, as individuals, have you done what you ought in contributing to this building? I ask have you done what a congregation, I believe I may say of five thousand persons, ought to have done? Do that and then I am sure the country will share your feelings, approve of your self-denial, and complete what is wanting. Oh, it is a blessing even to have been present at the proceedings of this day—we will cherish the memory of it to life's latest moment. It is a greater blessing still to have had the mind to work, and to put forth the hand in exertion towards the completion of this undertaking. I beseech you, therefore, every one of you, do your share, either in giving, or in collecting; and fear not that God in his mercy, who has hitherto so marvellously prospered you in days of darkness, in times of peril and persecution—who has blessed you so much in the person and ministry of your beloved pastor, will in the future annals of this New Tabernacle, still more abundantly and more wondrously shower down upon you of his heavenly favor and most divine regard.

The Rev. EVAN P ROBERT of Bristol: My Lord Mayor, and Christian friends, I cannot less than say, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear," what your ancestors desired to see and to hear. We must consider ourselves this day highly privileged in being permitted to meet on such a very important and delightful occasion. I need not tell you, because your esteemed chairman has announced it, that I am come from the city of Bristol—a city where your pastor is very highly esteemed and beloved, a city ready to receive him with open heart and arms; a city in which Christians of all denominations hailed with gladness the approach of my dear brother Spurgeon, and I have not the shadow of a doubt, from my knowledge of Bristol, that the Christians in that city will be ever ready to contribute their mite towards the erection of that large building, the foundation of which has been laid this day. The first time that I had the privilege of meeting with Mr. Spurgeon, I felt that I loved him; and my love to him has increased with my acquaintance with him. I feel this evening, as I have felt before, a deep interest in the movement that is now going on in this place, and I am sanguine as to its results. I have not the shadow of a doubt that by the time the last stone is to be placed upon the building, the money will be forthcoming, and our esteemed brother will have to ascend the pulpit and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, in a chapel out of debt. I could not less than think, Christian friends, while our excellent chairman was addressing us on the subject of civil and religious liberty, that we ought all to be thankful, and not only so, but that we ought to be more zealous to maintain our ground, and to make advances in that respect. I rejoice that, notwithstanding all the oppositions that are made to the progress of civil and religious liberty, it is going forward—going forward in the metropolis—going forward in the provinces—going forward through the length and breadth of the land, in spite of the Puseyism, of the Popery, of the infidelity, and all the power of that is brought to bear to oppose it; it is a principle that must go on and prevail, until it shall be felt throughout the habitable world. I am afraid to trespass on your time. We Welshmen are very dangerous: when we begin to speak and get the steam up a little, we hardly know where to stop. You must tell me therefore when my time is up, for I

find I cannot trust myself. I have been thinking with regard to the stone that is laid to-day, that it stands there as a witness of the working of the voluntary principle. Some people have told us that the principle has failed. Where has it failed? Wherever it has been exercised, wherever it has had fair play, it has done great things. What has erected our chapels? What has erected, too, some of the churches in our land? Why, the voluntary principle. And what has moved my esteemed friend, Mr. Spurgeon, and his beloved people to take this very important, this noble step, but the voluntary principle working in their hearts? There is no compulsion from the throne, all the compulsion they have is the love of Christ in their souls. May God increase that principle a thousand-fold! What has made my brother Spurgeon so popular?—to use the term, for want of better? What has given him such power with the people in this city, and wherever he has gone? It is this; he has preached the full and plain gospel, and the Spirit of God has rested upon his words. That stone stands as a witness of the power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as preached by our little stripling, our little David, who has been the means of effecting such good. And not only so, we see that stone as a witness of the faithfulness of God to his church. God has said that he would be with his people always, even to the end of the world. That stone stands as a witness there, and stone upon stone as it is laid upon it will give an additional testimony to the fidelity of him who said, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” That stone stands as a witness to angels to devils, to infidels, and to the Christian church, of the zeal of the people of God at Park Street. May that zeal burn as a vehement flame! May it break out on the right hand, and on the left, and may your liberality be exercised until the whole money for the Tabernacle shall be contributed, and the building be completed, and out of debt. I hope the blessing of God will attend this meeting; that it will be the means of stirring up our brethren in the provinces, and reviving religion in the land, that we shall have some of the showers that are descending upon Ireland and Scotland, and that this shall be the beginning of better days. God grant that it may be so! Only let us retire from this place imploring God’s blessing and devoting ourselves to his service, and the showers will come down, for God has said, “As the snow and the rain cometh down from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, so shall my Word be that cometh forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I have sent it.”

The Rev. JOHN SPURGEON: My Lord Mayor, I am very happy to meet you to-night. We are Essex men; we come from Colchester. Colchester has something to boast of great men. The chief physician of London comes from Colchester, the Lord Mayor comes from Colchester; and I need not tell you who else. I have never had the headache in my life, friends; but if I ever had it, it would have been to-day. I feel nervous and excited. But I do feel very happy to-day to acknowledge my fault; and when a man confesses his faults, he has done a great deal towards amending them. I always thought my son did wrong in coming to London, now you see that I was wrong. I always thought he was wrong in not going to college, I tried three or four hours with him one night with a dear friend that loved him, but it was no use; he said, “No, I will never go to college, only in strict obedience to you as a father.” There I left the matter; and I see that God has been with him, though I thought it was a wrong step in him to go to London. And I thought it was a wrong step for me to come here to-night, but perhaps I may be mistaken again. I can tell you it is one of the happiest days of my life. I feel beyond myself when I think of the kindness that has been shown to him when but a youth. I ascribe it all to God’s goodness and the earnest prayers of his people. He has been exposed to temptations from every source, and even now, my friends, he is not free from it. You have prayed for him, and God has sustained him. Oh! let me entreat you to continue your prayers.

Every one here to-night go home and pray for your pastor. A meeting like this is enough to carry a man beyond himself and fill his heart with pride; but the grace of God is all-sufficient. Several persons said to me—I do not know what their motive was—“Your son will never last in London six months, he has no education” I said, “You are terribly mistaken, he has the best education that can possibly be had, God has been his teacher, and he has had earthly teachers too.” I knew, as far as education went, he could manage London very well. Then they said his health would fail; but it has not failed him yet He has had enough to shake his constitution, it is true, but God has been very merciful to him. I think if there is one thing that would crown my happiness today, it would have been to see his grandfather here. I should have loved to see him here. He said, “Boy, don’t ask me to go, I am too old; I am overcome with God’s goodness and mercy to me.” He is always talking about him. Old people like to have something to talk about, so talks about his grandson. And next to that I should like, my dear friends, to have seen his mother here. I believe, under God’s grace, his mother has been the means of leading him to Christ. You are well aware that I go and talk in the best manner I can to a few poor people on the Sabbath day, and God has blessed my labors. I thought, however, I ought not to go out on the Sabbath day, as God’s people should train up their children in the best way they: can, I thought I was neglecting my children, and as I came home one evening about seven o’clock, and went upstairs, I heard the voice of a mother pleading for her boy Charles, and talking to him and the others, and pouring her heart out in prayer in such a way as I never did in my life, and as I never heard before. It is for the encouragement of mothers that I mention this, that you may pray for your children for God is a prayer-hearing and prayer answering God. My heart is too full to say more. May God bless you and keep you, and may we be brought together when this building shall be finished, and entirely out of debt! I hope to-night that some gentlemen will come forward and give each one hundred pounds. You know we must work as well as pray, and there has been a kind offer made to-night, that if twenty hundred pounds are laid down, a gentleman will double it. I trust, therefore, our good friends will come forward and make their free-will offerings to that God who has done so much for them. Oh, may God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

The CHAIRMAN: I have now to call upon the gentleman who made the best speech this morning, and laid upon the foundation stone three thousand pounds.

EDWARD INSKIP, Esq., of Bristol.—My Lord Mayor, and Christian friends, as regards “the best speech” that has been made to-day, I trust that any merit in the speech, or in the donation will be laid at the feet of our covenant head. I was thinking during the speeches to which we have listened, of a line or two of one of the poets of the sanctuary:—

“Let party names no more, the Christian world o’erspread.”

And when I tell you that this gift of three thousand pounds, together with that which follows, comes from a man who was born a Churchman, and who was brought to a knowledge of the truth under a minister of the Church of England, and who is a Churchman at heart, you will see that his liberality is profound, and that he comes here in the true philanthropic principles of the Christian religion. But since I had the honor and privilege of laying that painted piece of paper, as I termed it, upon the stone this afternoon, I have been going round the boundaries of the proposed walls of this intended sanctuary, and I was thinking as I mused upon the various portions of the stones and gravel, cement, lime, ashes, bricks, and timber—what would be the position which the multitude before me would occupy in that better temple, where we all hope to adore the Lamb. I was led to ask, is my name, however mean and humble, inscribed there as a living stone? Believe me, if you

value his instructions there, and wish to see that building the birthplace of souls nothing short of an earnest and agonising entreaty that God the eternal Spirit will sanctify that Word will ever promote your views, or bring about the realisation of your wishes. Believe me, it has afforded me great gratification to be the bearer of this honored man's donation—my esteemed friend unknown to you. I said this afternoon, there is something more to follow. Three thousand pounds will not erect the building. I understand that it will take no less than seven times as much again. Where is it all to come from? I hear that the response to-day has realized only about three thousand nine hundred pounds, and that about two hundred pounds more is promised. Now, I do not pretend to be a Goliath, but I come as a simple stripling, and ask, who am I and what my father's house, that I am thus honored to ask twenty other persons to come forward and give their one hundred pounds apiece, or even forty persons their fifty pounds each, with the promise that the sum shall be doubled when that is done? This I am sure is nothing less than your pastor deserves. He has devoted his time, his energy, his health, to this matter. He has been incessant in his labors, and he has found that they have been crowned with success. As for you, the fruit of his labors, it behoves you to see that he has a place in which he can address the multitudes who flock to hear him. This afternoon he spoke of this building being erected and the roof put on, and the Tabernacle being left seatless. Surely this will not be permitted. Whether it be by the humblest mite or by the large donation, I am sure that those who love the Lord Jesus Christ will see that this thing is accomplished, and speedily too. We were speaking just now of the living stones in the temple above, and I was thinking of a scene which occurred to me in the Music Hall yonder, some year or two since. When I heard the sounds of the voices of the multitude there, I bethought myself on that occasion, why, what must be the heavenly choir; if such be the perfection of sound realized by the humble few here upon earth?—what must be the sound rising from immortal voices and from angelic tongues? Surely while we contemplate the grandeur of that scene, we shall all be in earnest in asking ourselves the one question—are we heirs of the kingdom of God? We shall all be asking ourselves that marvellous question, “Is my name inscribed on the walls of Zion?” Remember, Jesus dwells there, and if Jesus dwells there, we desire to dwell there too. See to it, then, my friends, that this meeting conclude not without some large, some noble response to that which I consider a noble offer I have been permitted, on behalf of another, to make to you to-day. The offer you have heard; it rests with you to accept it; and whenever it may be accepted the money will be forthcoming, as the three thousand pounds is forthcoming now, on the very day when the two thousand shall be realized. But then I was about to disclose to you a secret—although, perhaps, Mr. Spurgeon may not like me to disclose it to you. I must tell you that he was very desirous that I should come and bring a large mass of feathers with which to line this beautiful nest. I trust it will be a nest indeed, but not a nest in which you may nestle yourselves into fatal security: I trust it will be a nest which you will find the birds of the air, whose feathers are of yellow gold, will set and brood over, and that there the sweet influences of those heavenly scenes will descend into your heart. I trust I shall be able to carry back with me to-morrow the intelligence that the offer I have made has been accepted, and that I shall shortly have the great pleasure of presenting to you the additional two thousand pounds.

The Rev. J. A. SPURGEON: My lord, ladies, and gentlemen—Your lordship said at the commencement of this meeting, that it was a happy day. I am quite sure I can echo that sentiment now from the depth of my spirit, and I think that I have in my cup one sweet ingredient which must be lacking in yours,—that of having such a brother as I have, in your ministry. If ever pride can be a sinless thing, I think it will be in my case when I say I am proud of my brother. But I would desire

to take that stand which the Apostle Paul took when he determined “to know no man after the flesh.” Though I rejoice tonight most heartily in the success my brother has achieved, I rejoice more profoundly in the success which has attended the preaching of the gospel, and in the principles of the cross of Christ which I see here to-night. Whilst I look around me and see that every other religion is beginning to fade—that every other system is tottering to its fall—that everything that is of man seems like man to be fading—Christianity is growing in strength, and seems to have the dew of its youth upon it, and is going forth crushing all things before it, and it shall triumph till it shall fill the world with its knowledge, power, and glory. I rejoice to think that whilst I come in to take up that standard which aged hands must soon begin to let fall I see on it the “Excelsior” motto inscribed, and I see that it is going higher and higher, and it shall go so high till my Master shall be lifted up and shall draw all men unto him. I rejoice most devoutly in that divine dispensation which makes a luxury in doing good and a blessedness also, so that he who puts forth his hand to bring down a blessing upon others evokes the shower of divine blessing on his own head,—that he who does good must get good,—that he who serves the Lord shall never serve the Lord for nought. I am sure in our meeting here to-day—met as we are seeking the welfare of others—that there shall be the richest blessing poured out upon our heads; and I trust that there will be some departing from this place to-night who will be made rich with those riches which add no sorrow therewith. It has been said that there are sermons in stones, and if ever there is one class of stones that may be expected to have a voice, and eloquence, and depth of wisdom above others, it would be that class of stones to which we refer the one that has been laid to-day. Would that we could bring the corner and foundation stones of some of our old chapels and make them speak to-night! Methinks they would cry, “shame,” upon some of our fearful trembling-hearted ones to-night. The difficulties our ancestors had to encounter were far greater than ours. The stones they laid were laid under far less favorable auspices than our stone has been laid. This is an age of panic, and of fears, but I rejoice to think that we are putting our panic and fears in a practical way of building up defences for Zion; and I hope there will arise many more mighty arsenals, in which the great guns of our denomination may come and fire with great success into the camp of our enemies. I rejoice to think of the success that has already attended the efforts of our friends in collecting money; and whilst we feel very happy here tonight, I think we ought to give our happiness a practical turn. I cannot leave this meeting unless we once again raise our solemn thanksgiving to God for the great goodness and the great love that he hath shown our brother. I yield to no one in the profound respect I entertain for my brother’s peculiar talents, but I hold that it has not been so much how he has said, as what he has said, that has achieved his success. I hope that this meeting will take a practical and that we shall go forth tonight determined that we will preach more earnestly and simply, and then I trust with more success, the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. JAMES LOW: The object of my rising is to call your attention to the noble offer that our friend, Mr. Inskip, has made. Our friend has given us a promissory note for two thousand pounds, on one condition, that is, that we raise another two thousand pounds in hundreds and fifties. This morning I screwed up my courage to fifty pounds, but as soon as that challenge was given, I altered my mind and made it one hundred pounds. This is a large meeting, containing some thousands of persons. I know there are some here who are very rich, and who could pay the whole expense of this building out of their own pockets and scarcely miss it, and I can hardly imagine that you will allow my friend Mr. Inskip, to go away disappointed. Let me beseech you to fix him at once. Now, I have to ask that nineteen other gentlemen, or ladies, if you please—for their money is equally

valuable—to give a pledge for one hundred pounds each, and that will make up the two thousand pounds which our friend, Mr. Inskip, has promised to double. If you would only do that this evening, it would give such an impetus to our efforts to raise the whole of the money required for this building, that I do believe we should get enough, in a month, to complete it. But lest I should be disappointed, our kind friend has given me a still greater latitude. I do not want to check the nineteen friends from coming forward with their hundred pounds; but he has very kindly allowed me to say, that if a portion of it comes in hundreds, the deficiency may be made up in fifties. Now, surely with such latitude as that, we must succeed in getting the two thousand pounds. And then he has done another thing which I think was very liberal. If I fail to succeed after making this offer, I do not know what sort of a character I shall be able to give you. It is this: he will not only take it in hundreds and fifties, but, if it is more convenient for you to pay within three months, he will give you credit for that time. Now, as an old tradesman, I have known in my time what it is to be tempted by having a little credit offered me, but I took care I would not take credit for any article that I did not feel confident to be able to pay for in a given time. I feel the greatest encouragement in asking you either to send up your names for one hundred pounds each, or to those who cannot afford so much, for fifty pounds, and those who are not prepared to pay the money down, we will give three months credit. Do not let me plead in vain.

The Rev. GEORGE SMITH, of Poplar: My Lord Mayor, ladies and gentlemen, I have very great pleasure in taking some part in the deeply interesting proceedings of this night. When I think of the men who have already spoken with fervor, with pathos, with eloquence, and with the intimate knowledge of your Master, which justify them in honoring him as they have, and when I think of the other brethren on the platform of your own denomination, who will further vindicate the cause with which you are connected, and advocate the great object which you have in view,—I should shrink from the responsibility of occupying any portion of your attention, but for the fact that I belong to another denomination. I am with you in heart though I am not with you altogether in practice. I am connected with the Congregational denomination, as most of you if not all know, and I am here to testify on behalf of myself and of my brethren generally, to the very great regard we have for that gifted young man, under thirty years of age, whose name has become a worldwide reputation, and who everywhere has been greatly honored of God in turning multitudes from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. I never had any doubt about him from the beginning. I never entertained a suspicion of him from the commencement. I never uttered an unkind word about him from the time when he commenced his ministry. I always thought that he was raised up of God to do a great and good work, and we might well rejoice if men are raised up in a way rather different from that which we had anticipated. There is a fact upon record of very great value in relation to liberty of preaching. In the days of Oliver Cromwell, many soldiers went to Edinburgh on the Lord's day, and finding there was very indifferent preaching in the pulpits, Cromwell's chaplain took possession of the churches and preached the word of life. The Presbytery wrote a letter complaining to the Lord Protector, that his soldiers—the men connected with the iron-hearted regiment that he headed—those iron-sides, who feared God and kept their powder dry—actually had ventured to preach the word of life in the regular sanctuary. Cromwell's reply was worthy to be written in characters of living light, and handed down from age to age. "What! doth that offend you? I would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets." And with that feeling, my lord, I am sure that we have hailed the advent of our beloved brother, Mr. Spurgeon. I hope his life will long be spared, and that a great and important work will be carried on by him. If

there be a man under heaven that we might envy, and if there be a man under heaven in whom we might glorify the Grace of God, he is the man. I honor the man that he has never pandered to the public taste. He has always preached the word of life fully, faithfully, and effectually. I honor the man for the large-hearted Catholicity which has characterized him. The pulpits of the land have properly been opened to him, and he has ever been ready to preach for his brethren of every denomination. I have heard him preach in my own pulpit to crowded and delighted audiences. And I am sure that we ought to be prepared to help him in return, for he has been prepared to help very many. I am sure I am only among a large number of my brethren—and I mention it as an encouragement to others—I proposed a short time ago to the deacons of our church that, as he had often preached on behalf of other objects for us, we should invite him to come and preach, and give him a liberal collection towards this New Tabernacle. And it only waits for the time to be fixed by him, and I trust we shall all be prepared to do everything we can to promote the common welfare of this great church and congregation. I congratulate this meeting to-night most heartily and cordially upon the fact that three beloved honored men, bearing one name and related to each other, have taken part in this meeting. May they be a three-fold cord that cannot readily be broken. In expressing the largest desires for the welfare of the Baptist denomination represented by Mr. Spurgeon, I am only giving utterance to feelings that we all entertain. There is but little difference between us, but a very little difference indeed. Different sections of the church of God look at each other in the distance through the mists of prejudice and passion, and they think they are monsters; they get a little nearer and they find they are men—brethren, related to one common Father, related to one divine Redeemer who is not ashamed to call us brethren, and whether we be Baptists or psuedo-Baptists, whether we be Presbyterians or Congregationalists, whether we be Arminians or Calvinists (though I am not ashamed to call myself a Calvinist) if we are good men and true, we are related to each other, and to the Lord. Let us, then be limited, and angels shall look down from the crystal battlements of heaven and say of our congregations here—“Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

The Meeting then sung the following verse, commencing, “Jesus is worthy to receive honor and power divine.”

JOSEPH PAYNE, Esq.: ladies and gentlemen, I am very glad to meet you all upon the present occasion. I am one of those Churchmen whom my Lord Mayor has been digging in the ribs in rather an extraordinary manner; but I am not one that he would find fault with, I am sure. We have been working together too long and too often for any of his observations to be applied in that way to my humble self. The late Rev Mr. Branch used to say, that an old woman once asked him, “Mr. Branch, can you tell me what Mr. Payne is?” “Why,” said Mr. Branch, “he is a Churchman.” “No, no,” said the woman, “I am sure he ain’t.” “Why?” “Because wherever I go I sees him—at Wesleyan meetings, at Baptist meetings, at Congregational meetings, and at all sorts of meetings—well, if he is a Churchman he’s a rum un.” The Rev. Dr. Archer was once speaking at a meeting, (you see I am giving myself a character,) and he went through the list of speakers, and said—“The first is Dr. Archer, a humble Presbyterian; the second is Mr. Branch, a sturdy Baptist; the third is Mr. Gladstone, an Episcopalian; the fourth is Mr. Edward Corderoy, who belongs to the Wesleyan body, and the fifth is Joseph Payne, who belongs to nobody;” and he gave the reason—“he belongs to nobody because he belongs to everybody.” Now, I think I have said enough about myself; I am aging to say a word or two about my excellent friend, the Rev. Mr. Spurgeon. Among these decorations, there is one that I do not see, but I have it before my mind’s eye—I mean the three letters C. H. S.

[A voice: "It is outside."] Then we have it outside and inside too. Now, what does C. H. S. mean? Why, it means first, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon." But I do not mean that. C. H. S. means a *Clear-Headed Speaker*, who is *Clever at Handling Subjects* in a *Cheerful-Hearted Style*; he is a *Captain of the Home of Surrey*; he is a *Cold-Hating Spirit*; he has *Chapel-Heating Skill*; he is a *Catholic Humbug-Smasher*, he is a *Care-Hushing Soother*; he is a *Child-Helping Strengtheners*: he is a *Christ-Honouring Soldier*, and he is a *Christ-Honoured Servant*. Those are all the C. H. S's, and a very good set of C. H. S's they are. Now I desire to look back upon the past, to look round upon the vast, and to look onward to the last. I desire to look back to the *past*. Our friend was always popular, always clever, always active, but he was not always so popular, he had not always the large number of friends that gather round him now. I knew him and loved him, and admired him from the beginning, therefore I look back upon the past with great satisfaction to think that I had so much discernment, that has been so admirably proved, and so magnificently repaid. I look round upon the *vast*. It is a goodly and glorious sight to see such a meeting as this, with the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor in the chair. You know it is said there are four descriptions of speakers to preside at public meetings:—some who are able and not willing, some who are willing and not able, some who are neither able nor willing, and some who are both able and willing. Now the Lord Mayor belongs to the fourth class. He is a first-class man in some respects but a fourthclass in that respect. He has shown his willingness in coming here, and he has shown his ability in that splendid, magnificent, glorious speech that he made, though he was a little too hard upon some of us Episcopalians. I look onward to the *last*. Oh! what a glorious thought that will be when all the instrumentality shall be at an end, when we shall see the grand glorious gathering in the brighter and better world above! The Lord Mayor will be there, Spurgeon the grandfather will be there; the father—the mother—the brother—and Spurgeon himself will be there, and I pray God that you and I may be there also. I have a high opinion of our excellent friend for four reasons: he is a preacher that does not mumble, he is a preacher that does not grumble, he is a preacher that does not stumble, and he is a preacher that never will crumble. He is a preacher that does not *mumble*. One of our celebrated authorities in the law, old Seldon, says, that if a man were to call out murder in the same tone in which he would make love, nobody would come to his assistance. A minister of the gospel is calling out murder, and it is to be called out in a loud tone; not in a namby pamby style. He is also a preacher that does not *grumble*. You heard him tonight say how pleased he was with the salary given by the people of Park Street. He is perfectly satisfied with what he gets; though he has not half that he deserves. He is a preacher that does not *stumble*. Did you ever see a man walk more firmly than he does before the world and the church? He walks firmly, physically, morally, and religiously. Then he is a preacher that will not *crumble*. The man himself will die—many many years let it be before that consummation is arrived at! We all must die, but the reputation and character of a faithful preacher of God's free and glorious gospel will never die. We may address the character and reputation of such a man in the language of the poet, and say:—

"The stars shall fade away; the sun himself
Grow dim in age, and nature sink in years.
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds."

I would say—*pray and believe*; then *persist and receive*. In connection with the first, let me tell you that there was a number of farmers somewhere in Essex, who met to pray for rain in a large

open field. The deacons were there; the “Lows” and the “Olneys,” and the good men of that stamp, the five pounders and the fifty pounders, and the hundred pounders were there for the purpose. It was a fine day but there was a little Sunday school girl who came with an umbrella under her arm. The minister, who was not so clever as Mr. Spurgeon, said, “Why, bless you, my good girl, what do you mean by bringing a great umbrella on such a fine day as this?” “Why, sir,” said she, “have not you all met to pray for rain? Don’t you expect to get it if you pray properly? I do, so I picked out the biggest umbrella I could find.” Well, there came a heavy shower and the ministers and the deacons were all very glad to get under the little school girl’s umbrella. And the ministers and deacons went out from under that umbrella with their heads lower than they had been before, because they had been shamed into propriety by a little Sunday school girl. Pray, then, and believe. Pray that God will give you friends, and believe that you will get them. The next is, *persist and receive*. There was a clergyman in Ireland who met with a ragged boy, and he took him to a ragged school. The boy was very fond of using his slate and pencil; he never put sums upon his slate, but drew ugly pictures of the boys and the master. The master did not like it, because schoolmasters, you know, are very uppish people, some of them; stuck-up people who think they ought not to be caricatured. He sent to the clergyman, saying “I cannot manage the boy at all, I wish you would take him away.” “Indeed I shall do no such thing,” said the clergyman, “I will come and see him, and talk to him. So the clergyman came, and there was the boy in the school working away with his slate and pencil. “Well,” said the clergyman, “bring up your slate let us see what you are doing.” The boy did not like to do so, but however he brought up his slate, and, giving it to the clergyman, bobbed his head down to avoid a box on the ears, which he knew he deserved and thought he might get. But that was not the clergyman’s plan. He looked at the slate and he there saw the ugliest picture of the good old clergyman himself, with long ears, very long hair, a hole in his coat, and his white choker as dirty as it could be. He looked at it and said, “You have a very good notion of drawing, my boy, my daughter draws beautifully, and if you will come to the parsonage house three times a week, she shall teach you to draw. Well, she did teach him to draw, and that boy is now an artist,—a capital painter in London. And the very first thing he did, was to paint a beautiful picture of the good clergyman and the daughter who had been so kind to him, and presented it to them in a beautiful frame, as a token of his respect and gratitude for their having saved him from destruction, and putting him in the way of gaining a honest livelihood. That clergyman persisted and received the end of his perseverance. Now I want you to persist and go on with this great work, and you will, in spite of all discouragements and difficulties, be sure to receive. You will draw people in the Tabernacle, and money to your funds, and then great things will be done. Now I have to read some verses, and then there will be an end.

My breath I will spend, and my horn I will blow,
 The claims and requirements to let the world know,—
 (Though my horn is not gold, but is only brass gilt,)
 Of the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
 Sir Samuel, Baptist, and Baronet too,
 In handling the trowel to science was true,
 And charged it with mortar right up to the hilt,
 For the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
Unconquered, at present, friend Spurgeon is found,
 But soon he will hold *unapproachable* ground;

For no one will dream with the pastor to tilt,
 Of the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
 With wonderful talent all ranks to comprise,—
 The truth that he preaches to make people wise
 He'll spread o'er his hearers, just like a great quilt,
 In the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
 The Englishman plainly and soberly dress'd,—
 The Irishman clad in his holiday vest,—
 Will sit, side by side, with the Scot in his kilt,
 In the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
 Rich merchant of London, if such should be here,
 Thou, friend to a preaching sublime and sincere,
 Can'st not give too much, give whatever thou wilt,
 To the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
 Poor widow, neglected, distress'd, and forlorn,
 The prop of thy age from thy dwelling withdrawn,
 To cast in two mites will not fix thee with guilt,
 T'wards the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
 Friend Spurgeon, the clearest of preachers I know,
 Look on to the time when thy language shall flow
 Like a beautiful stream, without thickness or silt,
 In the great Tabernacle that is to be built.
 And thousands deliver'd from sin and from hell,
 In mansions of glory for ever shall dwell,
 Who heard of the blood which for sinners was spilt,
 In the great Tabernacle that is to be built.

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON: If our friends are not tired I should like another brother to speak, and I have a few words to say before I call upon my brother Bloomfield. I have been treated somewhat severely by that class of brethren who are exceedingly strong in their Calvinism. Many suspect me of being a great heretic. Now, a great heretic I certainly am, if it be heresy to judge of the Scriptures as God the Holy Ghost gives me ability, and not to bend myself to the dictates of man. I am, I ever must be, from my deep and terrible experience of the depravity of the human heart, a high Calvinist, in the best sense of that term. I am not bitter towards others; but I do love to preach the fullness of the decree of God. I do love, however, so to preach it that I may combine it with practical exhortation and fullness of precept. There are many brethren who believe the same. The stone has to be rolled away from the spulchre of Calvinism yet. The Calvinism of some men is the Calvinism of John Calvin, nor the Calvinism of the Puritans, much less the Christianity of God. My dear brother Bloomfield is one of those who hold the truth very strongly. I hope he may hold it never less sternly. He has an affectionate loving heart, and he is not prepared to condemn one who, in some points, differs from the brethren. I do differ from some in certain matters, those are but small matters compared with the grand fundamentals of that holy faith delivered to us by Christ, translated by Paul, handed down by Augustine, clarified by Calvin, vindicated yet again by Whitfield, and held by us as the very truth of God, as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Rev. J. BLOOMFIELD: I rejoice to be with you to-day, just to show my firm attachment to that honored servant of God who has been the means, under the influence and power of the Spirit, of bringing you together. I believe that the preaching of Mr. Spurgeon is in harmony with our good old puritan divines. I cannot understand that Christianity which dries up the sympathies of the human heart. I feel a strong sympathy with one expression dropped by Mr. Spurgeon's father. He said he thought his son did wrong when he first came to London. I thought so too, but what made me think so was losing a great many persons from my own congregation. However, I am very glad that so good a man has them, and I wish them well from my very heart, and him too, and all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. Any man that preaches the atonement in its perfection is a brother that I am glad to shake hands with and bid God speed. Whether or not he preaches the high and distinguishing doctrine of divine grace in the phraseology that I employ; whether or not he chooses to preach those doctrines in the plain language in which I am bound to preach them, because I can preach them in no other, I say I bid him God speed, and trust the blessing of God will go with him wherever he goes to preach the everlasting gospel of the blessed God. Christ said, when on earth, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor." I ask any man to look at the vast numbers that have testified before delighted audiences to the way in which the ministry of Mr. Spurgeon has been blessed to them; and I ask if God has not honored him; I ask if the Holy Ghost has not honored his testimony, and if the Father in heaven, if the Holy Ghost has sealed his ministry, where is the man that dares to speak against the success which he has realized so largely in his work. I love some of the friends that have spoken harshly of him, but I have always hated their harshness; I have told them so to their faces, as I would tell them again. I hate their bigotry, while I love the truth they preach. May God continue to bless the ministrations, of our excellent friend, and honor him with increasing and abundant success, for his own sake. Amen.

The Rev. C.H. SPURGEON proposed a vote of thanks to Sir Morton Peto, for his kindness in laying the stone, to the Lord Mayor for presiding, and the Lady Mayoress for coming to the meeting.

The motion having been seconded by James Low, Esq., was carried by acclamation.

The LORD MAYOR: The best thanks you could give me would be this, that you fill every box, and put your names to the piece of paper until you have got two thousand pounds. I believe you will have it tomorrow, if you do not get it to-night.

Mr. SPURGEON: The Lord Mayor has kindly said he shall contribute fifty pounds himself. I am sure, with his very great claims, it is far too much for us to expect from any Lord Mayor. He has out-done himself in liberality and I heartily thank him.

The Doxology was then sung, and the proceedings terminated.

The Committee think it needful to add, that notwithstanding the very great assistance afforded upon this occasion, their enterprise is very far from accomplishment. The freehold ground has been purchased and paid for, the excavation and throwing in of concrete for foundations have also been completed; and when this expense shall also have been fully defrayed, the Committee will find themselves with about ten thousand pounds in hand. The present contract for the erection of the building is twenty thousand pounds, which does not include lighting, boundary walls, and necessary furniture. The Committee therefore earnestly appeal to the Church of Christ for help in their arduous undertaking.

Subscriptions will be joyfully received by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON; or by Mr. T. COOK, Hon. Sec., New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, S.E.

Faith Illustrated

A Sermon

(No. 271)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 21st, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”—2 Timothy, 1:12.

AN ASSURANCE of our safety in Christ will be found useful to us in all states of experience. When Jesus sent forth his seventy chosen disciples, endowed with miraculous powers, they performed great wonders, and naturally enough they were somewhat elated when they returned to tell him of their deeds. Jesus marked their tendency to pride; he saw that in the utterance—“Behold even devils were subject to us,” there was mingled much of self-congratulation and boasting. What cure, think you, did he administer; or what was the sacred lesson that he taught them which might prevent their being exalted above measure? “Nevertheless,” said he, “rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” The assurance of our eternal interest in Christ may help to keep us humble in the day of our prosperity; for when God multiplies our wealth, when he blesses our endeavors, when he speeds the plough; when he wafts the good ship swiftly onward, this may act as a sacred ballast to us, that we have something better than these things, and therefore we must not set our affections upon the things of earth, but upon things above; and let our heart be where our greatest treasure is. I say, better than any lancet to spill the superfluous blood of our boasting, better than any bitter medicine to chase the burning fever of our pride; better than any mixture of the most pungent ingredients is this most precious and hallowed wine of the covenant—a remembrance of our safety in Christ. This, this alone, opened up to us by the Spirit, will suffice to keep us in that happy lowliness which is the true position of the full-grown man in Christ Jesus. But note this, when at any time we are cast down with multiplied afflictions, and oppressed with sorrow, the very same fact which kept us humble in prosperity may preserve us from despair in adversity. For mark you here, the apostle was surrounded by a great fight of affliction; he was compassed about with troubles, he suffered within and without; and yet he says, “Nevertheless I am not ashamed.” But what is that which preserves him from sinking? It is the same truth which kept the ancient disciples from overweening pride. It is the sweet persuasion of his interest in Christ. “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Get then, Christian brethren and friends, get assurance; be not content with hope, get confidence; rest not in faith, labor after the full assurance of faith; and never be content, my hearer, till thou canst say thou knowest thy election, thou art sure of thy redemption, and thou art certain of thy preservation unto *that day*.

I propose this morning in preaching upon this text to labor both for the edification of the saint and the conversion of the sinner. I shall divide the text very amply thus: First, we have in *the grandest action of the Christian's life*, namely, the committing of our eternal interests into the hand of Christ. Secondly, we have *the justification of this grand act of trust*—“I know in whom I have

trusted." I have not trusted one whose character is unknown to me, I am not foolish, I have sure grounds for what I have done. And then we have, thirdly, *the most blessed effect of this confidence*—"I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."

I. First, then I am to describe THE GRANDEST ACTION OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

With all our preaching, I am afraid that we too much omit the simple explanation of the essential act in salvation. I have feared that the anxious enquirer might visit many of our churches and chapels, month after month, and yet he would not get a clear idea of what he must do to be saved. He would come away with an indistinct notion that he was to believe, but what he was to believe he would not know. He would, perhaps, obtain some glimmering of the fact that he must be saved through the merits of Christ, but how those merits can become available to him, he would still be left to guess. I know at least that this was my case—that when sincere and anxious to do or be anything which might save my soul, I was utterly in the dark as to the way in which my salvation might be rendered thoroughly secure. Now, this morning, I hope I shall be able to put it into such a light that he who runs may read, and that the wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein.

The apostle says, he committed himself into the hands of Christ. His soul with all its eternal interests; his soul with all its sins, with all its hopes, and all its fears, he had put into the hands of Christ, as the grandest and most precious deposit which man could ever make. He had taken himself just as he was and had surrendered himself to Christ, saying—"Lord save me, for I cannot save myself; I give myself up to thee, freely relying upon thy power, and believing in thy love. I give my soul up to thee to be washed, cleansed, saved, and preserved, and at last brought home to heaven." This act of committing himself to Christ was the first act which ever brought real comfort to his spirit; it was the act which he must continue to perform whenever he would escape from a painful sense of sin; the act with which he must enter heaven itself, if he would die in peace and see God's face with acceptance. He must still continue to commit himself into the keeping of Christ. I take it that when the apostle committed himself to Christ, he meant these three things. He meant first, that from that good hour *he renounced all dependence upon his own efforts to save himself*. The apostle had done very much, after a fashion, towards his own salvation. He commenced with all the advantages of ancestry. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, as touching the law a Pharisee. He was one of the very straightest of the straightest sect of his religion. So anxious was he to obtain salvation by his own efforts, that he left no stone unturned. Whatever Pharisee might be a hypocrite, Paul was none. Though he tithed his anise, and his mint, and his cummin, he did not neglect the weightier matters of the law. He might have united with truth, in the affirmation of the young man, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." Hear ye his own testimony: "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." Being exceedingly desirous to serve God, he sought to put down what he thought was the pestilent heresy of Christ. Being exceeding hot in his endeavors against every thing that he thought to be wrong, he persecuted the professors of the new religion, hunted them in every city, brought them into the synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; when he had emptied his own country, he must needs take a journey to another, that he might there show his zeal in the cause of his God, by bringing out those whom he thought to be the deluded followers of an impostor. But suddenly Paul's mind is changed. Almighty grace leads him to see that he is working in a wrong direction, that his toil is lost, that as well might Sisyphus seek to roll his stone up hill, as for him to find a road to heaven up the steeps of Sinai; that as well might the daughters of Danaus hope to fill the bottomless cauldron with a bucket full of holes, as

Paul indulge the idea that he could fill up the measure of the laws' demands. Consequently he feels that all he has done is nothing worth, and coming to Christ he cries, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

And now, my dear friends, if you would be saved, this is what you must do. I hope many of you have already performed the solemn act, you have said to Jesus in the privacy of your closet, "O Lord, I have tried to save myself, but I renounce all my endeavors. Once I said, 'I am no worse than my neighbors; my goodness shall preserve me.' Once I said, 'I have been baptized, I have taken the sacrament, in these things will I trust,' and now, Lord, I cast all this false confidence to the winds.

'No more, my God, I beset no more
Of all the duties I have done;
I quit the hopes I held before
To trust the merits of thy Son.
The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before thy throne:
But faith can answer thy demands
By pleading what my Lord has done.'"

You cannot be saved if you have one hand on self and the other hand on Christ. Let go, cannier, renounce all dependence in anything thou canst do. Cease to be thine own keeper, give up the futile attempt to be thy own Saviour, and then thou wilt have taken the first step to heaven. There are but two, the first is—out of self, the next is—into Christ. When Christ is thy all, then art thou safe.

But again, when the apostle says he committed his soul to the keeping of Christ, he means that he had *implicit confidence that Christ would save him* now that he had relinquished all trust in self. Some men have gone far enough to feel that the best performance of their hands cannot be accepted before the bar of God. They have learned that their most holy acts are full of sin, that their most faithful service falls short of the demands of the law; they have relinquished self, but they are not able yet to see that Christ can and will save them. They are waiting for some great revelation; they think, perhaps, that by some marvellous electric shock, or some miraculous feeling within them, they will be led to place their confidence in Christ. They want to see an angel or a vision, or to hear a voice. Their cry is, "How could I think that Jesus would save such an one as I am. I am too vile, or else I am too hardened; I am the odd man; it is not likely that Christ would ever save me." Now, I doubt not that the apostle had felt all this, but he overcame all this attacking of sin, and he came to at last Christ and said, "Jesus, I feel that thou art worthy of my confidence. Behold, I the chief of sinners am, I have nothing in myself that can assist thee in taking me to heaven; I shall kick and struggle against thee rather than assist thee. But behold, I feel that such is thy power, and such thy love, that I commit myself to thee. Take me as I am, and make me what thou wouldst have me be. I am vile, but thou art worthy; I am lost, but thou art the Saviour; I am dead, but thou art the quickener; take me; I beseech thee; I put my trust in thee, and though I perish, I will perish relying on thy blood. If I must die, I will die with my arms about thy cross, for thou art worthy of confidence, and on thee do I rely."

And now, my friends, if you will be safe, you must, in the strength of the Holy Ghost, do this also. You say you have given up all trust in self—well and good; now place your trust in Christ, repose your all on him; drop into his arms; cast yourself into his power; lay hold on him. You know how Joab, when he fled from the sword of Solomon, laid hold on the horns of the altar, thinking that surely when he had laid hold on the altar he was safe. His was vain confidence, for he was dragged from the horns of the altar and slain. But if thou canst lay hold on the horns of the altar of God, even Christ, thou art most surely safe, and no sword of vengeance can ever reach thee.

I saw the other day a remarkable picture, which I shall use as an illustration of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus. An offender had committed a crime for which he must die, but it was in the olden time when churches were considered to be sanctuaries in which criminals might hide themselves and so escape. See the transgressor—he rushes towards the church, the guards pursue him with their drawn swords, all athirst for his blood, they pursue him even to the church door. He rushes up the steps, and just as they are about to overtake him and hew him in pieces on the threshold of the church, out comes the Bishop, and holding up the crucifix he cries, “Back, back! stain not the precincts of God’s house with blood! stand back!” and the guards at once respect the emblem and stand back, while the poor fugitive hides himself behind the robes of the priest. It is even so with Christ. The guilty sinner flies to the cross—flies straight away to Jesus, and though Justice pursues him, Christ lifts up his wounded hands and cries to Justice, “Stand back! stand back! I shelter this sinner; in the secret place of my tabernacle do I hide him; I will not suffer him to perish, for he puts his trust in me.” Sinner, fly to Christ! But thou sayest, “I am too vile.” The viler thou art, the more wilt thou honor him by believing that he is able to make thee clean. “But I am too great a sinner.” Then the more honor shall be given to him that thou art able to confide in him, great sinner though thou art. If you have a little sickness, and you tell your physician—“Sir! I am quite confident in your skill to heal,” there is no great compliment, but if you are sore sick with a complication of diseases, and you say—“Sir! I seek no better skill, I will ask no more excellent advice, I trust alone in you,” what an honor have you conferred on him, that you could trust your life in his hands when it was in extreme danger. Do the like with Christ; put your soul in his care, dare it, venture it; cast thyself simply on him; let nothing but faith be in thy soul; believe him, and thou shalt never be mistaken in thy trust.

But I think I have not completely stated all the apostle meant, when he said that he committed himself to Christ. He certainly meant those two things—self-renunciation, and implicit belief in Christ’s power and willingness to save, but in the third place, the apostle meant that he did make *a full and free surrender of himself to Christ*, to be Christ’s property, and Christ’s servant for ever. If you would be saved you must not be your own. Salvation is through being bought with a price; and if you be bought with a price, and thus saved, remember, from that day forward you will not be your own. To-day, as an ungodly sinner, you are your own master, free to follow the lusts of the flesh; or, rather Satan is your great tyrant, and you are under bondage to him. If you would be saved you must by the aid of the Holy Spirit now renounce the bondage of Satan and come to Christ, saying, “Lord I am willing to give up all sin, it is not in my power to be perfect but I wish it were, make me perfect. There is not a sin I wish to keep; take all away; I present myself before thee. Wash me, make me clean. Do what thou wilt in me. I make no reserve, I make a full surrender of all to thee.” And then you must give up to Christ all you are, and all you have by solemn indenture, signed and sealed by your own heart. You must say in the words of the sweet Moravian hymn—

“Take thou my soul and all my powers;

O take my memory, mind, and will,
 Take all my goods, and all my hours,
 Take all I know and all I feel;
 Take all I think and speak, and do;
 O take my heart, but make it new."

Accept the sacrifice,—I am worthless, but receive me through thy own merits. Take and keep me, I am, I hope I ever shall be thine.

I have now explained that act which is after all the only one which marks the day of salvation to the soul. I will give one or two figures however to set it in a clearer light. When a man hath gold and silver in his house, he fears lest some thief may break through and steal, and therefore if he be a wise man he seeks out a bank in which to store his money. He makes a deposit of his gold and his silver; he says in effect, "Take that, sir, keep it for me. To-night I shall sleep securely; I shall have no thought of thieves; my treasure is in your hands. Take care of that for me, when I need it, at your hands shall I require it." Now in faith we do just the same with our blessed Redeemer. We bring our soul just as it is and give it up to him. "Lord, I cannot keep it; sin and Satan will be sure to ruin it—take it and keep it for me, and in that day when God shall require the treasure, stand my sponsor, and on my behalf return my soul to my Maker kept and preserved to the end." Or take another figure. When your adventurous spirit hath sought to climb some lofty mountain, delighted with the prospect you scale many and many a steep; onward you climb up the rocky crags until at last you arrive at the verge of the snow and ice. There in the midst of precipices that scarcely know a bottom and of summits that seem inaccessible, you are suddenly surrounded with a fog. Perhaps it becomes worse and worse until a snow-storm completes your bewilderment. You cannot see a step before you: your track is lost. A guide appears: "I know this mountain," says he. "In my early days have I climbed it with my father. O'er each of these crags have I leaped in pursuit of the chamois; I know every chasm and cavern. If you will follow me even through the darkness I will find the path and bring you down; but mark, before I undertake to guide you in safety, I demand of you implicit trust. You must not plant your feet where *you* think it safest, but where I shall bid you. Wherever I bid you climb or descend you must implicitly obey, and I undertake on my part to bring you safely down to your house again." You do so—you have many temptations to prefer your own judgment to his but you resist them—and you are safe. Even so must you do with Christ. Lost to-day and utterly bewildered Christ appears. "Let me guide you, let me be an eye to thee through the thick darkness; let me be thy foot, lean on me in the slippery place, let me be thy very life; let me wrap thee in my crimson vest to keep thee from the tempest and the storm." Will you now trust him; rely entirely, simply, and implicitly upon him? If so, the grand act of your life is done and you are a saved man, and on the *terra firma* of heaven you shall one day plant your delighted feet and praise the name of him who saved you from your sins.

I must add, however, that this act of faith must not be performed once only, but it must be continued as long as you live. As long as you live you must have no other confidence but "Jesus only." You must take him now to-day, to have and to hold through life and in death, in tempest and in sunshine, in poverty and in wealth, never to part or sunder from him. You must take him to be your only prop, your only pillar from this day forth and for ever. What sayest thou sinner? Does God the Holy Ghost lead thee to say "Ay?" Does thy heart now confide in Jesus? If so, let the angels sing, for a soul is born to God, and a brand is plucked from the eternal fire. I have thus described faith in Christ—the committing of the soul to him.

II. This brings us to our second point—THE JUSTIFICATION OF THIS GRAND ACT OF TRUST.

Confidence is sometimes folly; trusting in man is always so. When I exhort you, then, to put your entire confidence in Christ, am I justified in so doing? and when the apostle could say that he trusted alone in Jesus, and had committed himself to him, was he a wise man or a fool? What saith the apostle? "I am no fool," said he, "for I *know* whom I have believed. I have not trusted to an unknown and untried pretender. I have not relied upon one whose character I could suspect. I have confidence in one whose power, whose willingness, whose love, whose truthfulness I know. I know whom I have believed." When silly women put their trust in yet more silly and wicked priests, they may say possibly that they know whom they have believed. But we may tell them that their knowledge must be ignorance indeed—that they are greatly deluded in imagining that any man, be he who he may, or what he may, can have any power in the salvation of his fellow's soul. You come sneaking up to me and ask me to repose my soul in you; and who are you? "I am an ordained priest of the Church of Rome." And who ordained you? "I was ordained by such a one." And who ordained him? "It cometh after all," saith he, "from the Pope." And who is he, and what is he more than any other man, or any other imposter? What ordination can he confer? "He obtained it directly from Peter." Did he? Let the link be proved; and if he did, what was Peter, and where has God given Peter power to forgive sin—a power which he should transmit to all generations? Begone! The thick pollutions of thine abominable church forbid the idea of descent from any apostle but the traitor Judas. Upon the Papal throne men worse than devils have had their seat, and even a woman big with her adulteries once reigned as head of thine accursed church. Go purge the filthiness of thy priesthood, the debauchery of thy nunneries and the stygian filth of thy mother city, the old harlot Rome. Talk not of pardoning others, while fornication is licensed in Rome itself, and her ministers are steeped to the throat in iniquity. But to return. I rest no more on Peter than Peter could rest in himself, Peter must rest on Christ as a poor guilty sinner himself, an imperfect man who denied his Master with oaths and curses. He must rest where I must rest, and we must stand together on the same great rock on which Christ doth build his church, even his blood and his ever-lasting merits. I marvel that any should be found to have such confidence in men, that they should put their souls in their hands. If however any of you wish to trust in a priest, let me advise you if you do trust him, to do it wholly and fully. Trust him with your cash-box, trust him with your gold and silver. Perhaps you object to that. You don't feel at all inclined to go that length. But, my friend, if you cannot trust the man with your gold and silver, pray don't trust him with your soul. I only suggested this because I thought you might smile and at once detect your error. If you could not trust such a fox with your business; if you would as soon commit your flocks to the custody of a wolf, why will you be fool enough to lay your soul at the feet of some base priest who, likely enough, is ten thousand times more wicked than your self.

Was Paul then justified in his confidence in Christ? He says he was because he *knew* Christ. And what did he know? Paul knew, first of all, Christ's Godhead. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. If my soul be in his hand,

"Where is the power can reach it there,
Or what can pluck it thence."

If the wings of Omnipotence do cover it, if the eye of Omnipotence is fixed upon it, and if the heart of eternal love doth cherish it, how can it be destroyed? Trust not thy soul my fellow-man anywhere but with thy God. But Jesus is thy God rely thou fully in him, and think not that thou

canst place a confidence too great in him who made the heavens, and bears the world upon his shoulders. Paul knew too that Christ was the Redeemer. Paul had seen in vision Christ in the garden. He had beheld him sweat as it were great drops of blood. By faith Paul had seen Jesus hanging on the cross. He had marked his agonies on the tree of doom. He had listened to his death shriek, of "It is finished," and he felt that the atonement which Jesus offered, was more than enough to recompense for the sin of man. Paul might have said, "I am not foolish in confiding my soul in the pierced and blood-stained hand of him whose sacrifice hath satisfied the Father and opened the gates of heaven to all believers." Further, Paul knew that Christ was risen from the dead. By faith he saw Christ at the right hand of God, pleading with his Father for all those who commit themselves to his hand. Paul knew Christ to be the all-prevailing intercessor. He said to himself "I am not wrong in believing him, for I know whom I have trusted, that when he pleads, the Father will not deny him, and when he asks, sooner might he even die than he become deaf to Jesus' prayer." This was again, another reason why Paul dared to trust in Christ. He knew his Godhead, he knew his redemption, he knew his resurrection, he knew his ascension, and intercession, and I may add, Paul knew the love of Christ, that love which passeth kindness; higher than thought, and deeper than conception. He knew Christ's power, that he was Omnipotent, the lying of kings. He knew Christ's faithfulness; that he was the God, and could not lie. He knew his immutability, that he was "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday today and for ever," and having known Christ in every glorious office, in every divine attribute, and in all the beauty of his complex character, Paul said, "I can with confidence repose in him, for I know him, I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

But Paul not only knew these things by faith, but he knew much of them by experience. Our knowledge of Christ is somewhat like climbing one of our Welsh mountains. When you are at the base you see but little, the mountain itself appears to be but one half as high as it really is. Confined in a little valley you discover scarcely anything but the rippling brooks as they descend into the stream at the base of the mountain. Climb the first rising knoll, and the valley lengthens and widens beneath your feet. Go up higher, and higher still, till you stand upon the summit of one of the great roots that start out as spurs from the sides of the mountain you see the country for some four or five miles round, and you are delighted with the widening prospect. But go onward, and onward, and onward, and how the scene enlarges, till at last, when you are on the summit, and look east, west, north, and south, you see almost all England lying before you. Yonder is a forest in some distant country, perhaps two hundred miles away, and yonder the sea, and there a shining river and the smoking chimneys of a manufacturing town, or there the masts of the ships in some well known port. All these things please and delight you, and you say, "I could not have imagined that so much could be seen at this elevation." Now, the Christian life is of the same order. When we first believe in Christ we see but little of him. The higher we climb the more we discover of his excellencies and his beauties. But who has ever gained the summit? Who has ever known all the fullness of the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Paul now grown old, sitting, grey hair'd, shivering in a dungeon in Rome—he could say, with greater power than we can, "I *know* whom I have believed?"—for each experience had been like the climbing of a hill, each trial had been like the ascending to another summit, and his death seemed like the gaining of the very top of the mountain from which he could see the whole of the faithfulness and the love of him to whom he had committed his soul.

III. And now, I close by noticing THE APOSTLE'S CONFIDENCE. The apostle said, "I am persuaded that *he* is able to keep that which I have committed to him." See this man. He is sure he shall be saved. But why? Paul! art thou sure that thou canst keep thyself? "No," says he, "I have nothing to do with that:" and yet thou art sure of thy salvation! "Yes," saith he, "I am!" How is it, then? "Why, I am persuaded that he is able to keep me. Christ, to whom I commit myself, I know hath power enough to hold me to the end." Martin Luther was bold enough to exclaim "Let him that died for my soul, see to the salvation of it." Let us catechise the apostle for a few minutes, and see if we cannot shake his confidence. Paul! Thou hast had many trials, and thou wilt have many more. What if thou shouldst be subject to the pangs of hunger, combined with those of thirst. If not a mouthful of bread should pass thy mouth to nourish thy body, or a drop of water should comfort thee, will not thy faith fail thee then? If provisions be offered thee, on condition of the denial of thy faith, dost thou not imagine that thou wilt be vane, quashed, and that the pangs of nature will overpower thee? "No," says Paul, "famine shall not quench my faith; for the keeping of my faith is in the hands of Christ." But what if, combined with this, the whole world should rise against thee, and scoff thee? What if hunger within should echo to the shout of scorn without? wouldst thou not then deny thy faith? If, like Demas, every other Christian should turn to the silver of this world, and deny the Master, wouldst not thou go with them? "No," saith the apostle, "my soul is not in my keeping, else might it soon apostatize; it is in the hand of Christ. though all men should leave me, yet will he keep me." But what, O apostle, if thou shouldst be chained to the stake, and the flames should kindle, and thy flesh should begin to burn; when thy beard is singed, and thy cheeks are black, wilt thou then hold him fast! "Yea," saith the apostle, "he will then hold me fast;" and I think I hear him, as he stops us in the midst of our catechising, and replies, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul, Paul, suppose the world should tempt you in another way. If a kingdom were offered you—if the pomps and pleasures of this world should be laid at your feet, provided you would deny your Master, would your faith maintain its hold then? "Yea," saith the apostle, "Jesus would even then uphold my faith for my soul is not in my keeping, but in his, and empires upon empires could not tempt him to renounce that soul of which he has become the guardian and the keeper. Temptation might soon overcome me, but it could not overcome him. The world's blandishments might soon move *me* to renounce my own soul; but they could not for one moment move *Jesus* to give me up." And so the apostle continues his confidence. But Paul, when thou shalt come to die, will thou not then fear and tremble? "Nay," saith he, "he will be with me there, for my soul shall not die, that will be still in the hand of him who is immortality and life." But what will become of thee when thy soul is separated from thy body? Canst thou trust him in a separate state, in the unknown world which visions cannot paint? In the time of God's mighty thunder, when earth shall shake and heaven shall reel. Canst thou trust him then? "Yea," saith the apostle, "until *that day* when all these tempests shall die away into eternal calm, and when the moving earth shall settle into a stable land in which there shall be no more sea, even then can I trust him.

"I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power,
What I've committed to his hands

Till the decisive hour.”

O poor sinner! come and put thy soul into the hands of Jesus. Attempt not to take care of it thyself; and then thy life shall be hidden in heaven, and kept there by the Almighty power of God, where none can destroy it and none can rob thee of it. “Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.”

Limiting God

A Sermon

(No. 272)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 28th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“They limited the Holy One of Israel,”—Psalm 78:41.

MAN IS ALWAYS ALTERING what God has ordained. Although God's order is ever the best, yet man will never agree therewith. When God gave forth the law it was engraved upon two stones. The first table contained the commandments concerning man and God, the second dealt with man and man. Sins against God are sins against the first table: sins against man are offenses against the second table. Man, to prove constantly his perversity, will put the second table before the first, nay, upon the first, so as to cover and conceal it. There are few men who will not allow the enormity of adultery, fewer still who will dispute the wickedness of murder. Men are willing enough to acknowledge that there is sin in an offense against man. That which endanger the human commonwealth, that which would disturb the order of earthly governments—all this is wrong enough even in man's esteem, but when you come to deal with the first table it is hard indeed to extort a confession from mankind. They will scarce acknowledge that there is any such thing as an offense against God, or if they do acknowledge it, yet they think it but a light matter. What man is there among you that hath not in his heart often lamented sins against man, rather, than sins against God? And which of you hath not felt a greater compunction for sins against your neighbor, or against the nation, than for sins committed against God and done in his sight? I say that such is the perversity of man, that he will think more of the less than the greater. An offense against the Majesty of heaven is thought to be far more venial than an offense against his fellow-creature. There are many transgressions of the first table of which we think so little, that perhaps we scarcely ever confess them at all, or if we acknowledge them, it is only because the grace of God has taught us to estimate them aright. One offense against the first table which seldom agitates the mind of an unconvicted sinner is that of unbelief, and with it, I may put the want of love to God. The sinner does not believe in God, does not trust in him, does not love him. He gives his heart to the things of earth, and denies it to his Creator. Of this high treason and rebellion he thinks nothing. If you could take him in the act of theft, a blush would mantle his cheek; but you detect him in the daily omission of love to God, and faith in his Son Jesus Christ, and you cannot make him feel that he is guilty of any evil in this. Oh! strange contortion of human judgment! Oh! blindness of mortal conscience, that this greatest of iniquities—a want of love to the All-Lovely, and a want of faith in him who is deserving of the highest trust—should be thought to be as nothing, and reckoned among the things that need not to be repented of.

Among such sins of the first table is that described in our text. It is consequently one of the masterpieces of iniquity, and we shall do well to purge ourselves of it. It is full of evil to ourselves, and is calculated to dishonor both God and man, therefore let us be in earnest to cut it up both root and branch. I think we have all been guilty of this in our measure; and we are not free from it even

to this day. Whether we be saints or sinners, we may stand here and make our humble confession that we have all “tempted the Lord our God and have limited the Holy One of Israel.”

What then is meant by limiting the Holy One of Israel? Three words will set forth the meaning. We limit the Holy One of Israel, sometimes by *dictation* to him; at other times by *distrust* of him, and some push this sin to its farthest extreme by an utter and entire despair of his goodness and his mercy. These three classes all in their degree limit the Holy One of Israel.

I. In the first place, I say we limit the Holy One of Israel by **DICTATING TO HIM**. Shall mortal dare to dictate to his Creator? Shall it be possible that man shall lay down his commands, and expect the King of heaven to pay homage to his arrogance? Will a mortal impiously say, “Not thy will but mine be done?” Is it conceivable that a handful of dust, a creature of a day, that knoweth nothing, should set its judgment in comparison with the wisdom of the Only Wise? Can it be possible that we should have the impertinence to map out the path of boundless wisdom, or should decree the footsteps which infinite grace should take, and dictate the designs which Omnipotence shall attempt? Startle! Startle at your own sin. Let each of us be amazed at our own iniquity. We have had the impudence to do this in our thoughts; we have climbed to the throne of the Highest; we have sought to take him from his throne that we might sit there; we have grasped his scepter and his rod; we have weighed his judgments in the balances and tried his ways in the scales; we have been impious enough to exalt ourselves above all that is called God.

I will first address myself to the saint, and with the candle of the Lord attempt to show to Israel her secret iniquity, and to Jerusalem her grievous sin.

Oh heir of heaven, be ashamed and be confounded, while I remind thee that thou hast dared to dictate to God! How often have we in our prayers not simply wrestled with God for a blessing—for that was allowable—but we have imperiously demanded it. We have not said, “Deny this to me, O my God, if so thou pleasest.” We have not been ready to play as the Redeemer did, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,” but we have asked and would take no denial. Not with all humble deference to our Lord’s superior wisdom and grace, but we have asked and declared that we would not be content unless we had that particular blessing upon which we had set our hearts. Now, whenever we come to God and ask for anything which we consider to be a real good, we have a right to plead earnestly, but we err when we go beyond the bounds of earnestness, and come to impudent demand. It is ours to ask for a blessing, but not to define what that blessing shall be. It is ours to place our head beneath the mighty hands of divine benediction, but it is not ours to uplift the hands as Joseph did those of Jacob, and say, “Not so, my father.” We must be content if he gives the blessing cross-handed; quite as content that he should put his left hand on our head as the right. We must not intrude into God’s almonry, let him do as seemeth him good. Prayer was never meant to be a fetter upon the sovereignty of God, much less a licensed channel for blasphemy. We must always subjoin at the bottom of the prayer this heavenly postscript, “Father, deny this if it be most for thy glory.” Christ will have nothing to do with dictatorial prayers, he will not be a partaker with us in the sin of limiting the Holy One of Israel.

Oftentimes, too, I think, we dictate to God with regard to the measure of our blessing. We ask the Lord that we might grow the enjoyment of his presence, instead of that he gives us to see the hidden depravity of our heart. The blessing comes to us, but it is in another shape from what we expected. We go again to our knees, and we complain of God that he has not answered us, whereas the fact has been that he has answered the spirit of our prayer, but not the letter of it. He has given us the blessing itself, but not in the shape we asked for it. We prayed him to give us silver, he has

given us gold; but we blind creatures cannot understand the value of this new-shaped blessing, and therefore we go grumbling to him as if he had never heard us at all. If ye ask, especially for temporal mercies, always take care to leave the degree of those mercies with God. Ye may say, "Lord, give me food convenient for me," but it is not yours to stipulate how many shillings you shall have per week, or how many pounds in the year. You may ask that your bread may be given you and that your water may be sure, but it is not yours to lay down to God out of what kind of vessels you shall drink, or on what kind of table your bread shall be served up to you. You must leave the measuring of your mercies with Him who measures the rain, and weighs the clouds of heaven. Beggars must not be choosers, and especially they must not be choosers when they have to deal with infinite wisdom and sovereignty.

And yet further, I fear that we have often dictated to God with regard to the time. As a church we meet together, and we pray God to send us a blessing. We expect to have it next week: it does not come. We wonder that the ministry is not blessed on the very next Sabbath day; so that hundreds are pricked in the heart. We pray again, and again, and again, and at last we begin to faint. And why is this? Simply because that in our hearts we have been setting a date and a time to God. We have made up our minds that the blessing must come within a certain period; and as it does not come, we do as it were spite our God by declaring we will stop no longer; that we have waited time enough; we will have no more patience; we will be gone; it is clear the blessing will not come. We waste our words we imagine by seeking it. Oh, how wrong is this!—What! is God to be tied to hours, or months, or years? Do his promises bear dates? Has he not himself said "Though the vision tarry, wait for it, it shall come, it shall not tarry." And yet we cannot wait God's time, but we must have our time. Let us always remember it is God's part to limit a certain day to Israel, saying, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice." But it is not our part to say to God, "To day if thou wilt hear my voice." No; let us leave time to him, resting assured that when the ship of our prayers are long at sea, they bring home all the richer cargo, and if the seeds of supplication are long buried, they shall produce the richer harvest; for God, honoring our faith which he has exercised by waiting, shall multiply his favors and enlarge his bounty. Your prayers are out at interest at a great percentage. Let them alone. They shall come back—not only the capital, but with compound interest—if ye will but wait till the time runs out, and God's promises becomes due.

Brethren, in these matters we cannot acquit ourselves, and I fear that much more than this will be necessary before our sin is fully unveiled. We have limited the Holy One in other ways, and I may remark that we have done this with regard to our prayers and efforts for others. A mother has been anxious for her children's conversion. Her eldest son has been the object of her fervent prayer. Never a morning has passed without earnest cries to God for his salvation; she has spoken to him with all a mother's eloquence; she has prayed in private with him, she has used every means which love could suggest to make him think of a better world. All her efforts at present seem to be wasted. She appears to be ploughing upon a rock, and casting her bread upon the waters. Year after year has rolled on—her son has left her house; he has commenced business for himself: he begins now to betray worldliness; he forsakes the house of prayer which his mother frequents. She looks round every Sabbath morning, but John is not there. The tear is in her eye. Every allusion in the minister's sermon to God's answering prayer makes her heart beat again. And at last she says, "Lo these many years have I sought God for this one blessing; I will seek no longer. I will however, pray another month, and then, if he hear me not, I think I can never pray again" "Mother, retract the words. Blot out such a thought from thy soul, for in this thou art limiting the Holy One of Israel. He is trying

thy faith. Persevere, persevere while life lasts, and if thy prayers be not answered in thy lifetime, mayhap from the windows of heaven thou shalt look down and see the blessing of thy prayers descend on the head of thy child.

This has been the case, too, when we have sought to do good to our fellow men. You know a certain man in whose welfare you take an extraordinary interest. You have availed yourself occasionally of an opportunity of addressing him; you have pressed him to attend the house of God, you have mentioned him in your private devotions, and often at your family altar. You have spoken to others that they might pray with you, for you believed the promise, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." But now months have rolled on, and your friend seems to be in a more hopeless condition than ever. Now he will not go to the house of God at all; perhaps some ungodly acquaintance has such power over him that your efforts are counteracted by his evil influence. All the good you can do is soon undone, and you are ready to say, "I will never use another effort; I will turn my attention to someone else. In this man's case, at least, my prayers will never be heard. I will withdraw my hand; I will not use unprofitable labor." And what is this but limiting the Holy One of Israel? What is this but saying to God, "Because thou hast not heard me when I wished to be heard—because thou hast not exactly blessed my efforts as I would have them blessed, therefore I will try this no more!" Oh impudence! oh impertinence to the majesty of heaven! Christian! cast out this demon and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God." Once again attempt, and not once, but though a thousand times thou fairest, try again, for God is not unfaithful to forget your work of faith and your labor of love. Only continue to exercise your patience and your diligence. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand, for either this or that shall surely prosper in its appointed season.

While thus charging the people of God with sin, I have been solemnly condemning myself, and if a like conviction shall abide upon all my believing hearers, my errand is accomplished. I will address myself now to those who cannot call themselves the children of God, but who have lately been stirred up to seek salvation. There are many of you who are not hardened and careless now. There was a time when you were callous and indifferent, but it is not so with you at the present moment. You are anxiously saying, "What must I do to be saved?" and have been, perhaps, very earnestly in prayer during the last two or three months. Every Sunday morning's service sends you home to your knees, and you cannot refrain from sighs and tears even in your daily business, for you cry as one that cannot be silenced, "Lord, save, or I perish!" Mayhap Satan has been putting it into your heart, that since your prayers have not been heard it is now of no avail. "Oh," saith the Evil One, "these many months hast thou prayed to God to put away thy sin, and he has not heard thee. Give it up; never bend thy knees again. Heaven is not for thee, therefore, make the best of this world; go and drink its pleasures; suck in its joys, lose not the happiness of both worlds; make thyself gay here, for God will never bless thee and save thee hereafter." And is this what he has said? Oh! listen not to him; he designs thy destruction. Hearken not to his voice. There is nothing he desires so much as that thou shouldst be his prey; therefore, be thou on thy watch-tower against him, and listen not to his cajoling. Hearken to me for a season, and God bless thee in the hearing, that thou mayest no longer limit the Holy One of Israel.

Sinner what hast thou been doing, while thou hast said "I will restrain prayer because God has not as yet answered me." I say what hast thou been doing? Hast thou not been stipulating with God as to the day when he shall save thee? Suppose it is written in the book of God's decree, "I will

save that man and give him peace after he has prayed seven years," would that be hard upon thee? Is not the blessing of divine mercy worth waiting for? If he keep thee tarrying at his gate day after day—though shoulder wait fifty years—if that gate opens at the last, will it not well repay thy waiting Knock man, knock again and go not away. Who art thou that thou shouldst say to God, "I will have peace on such a day or else I will cease to supplicated" This is a common offense with all poor trembling seeming souls. Confess it now and say unto God, "Lord I leave the time with thee, but I will not cease to supplicate, for

'If I perish I will pray,
And perish only there.'"

And do you not think again that perhaps the cause of your present distress is that you have been dictating to God as to the way in which he shall save you? You have a pious acquaintance who was converted in a very remarkable manner. He was suddenly convicted and as suddenly justified in the sight of God. He knows the very day and hour in which he obtained mercy, and you have foolishly made up your mind that you will never lay hold upon Christ unless you feel the same. You have laid it down as in a decree, that God is to save you, as it were, by an electric shock, that you must be consciously smitten, and vividly illumined, or else you will never lay hold on Christ. You want a vision. You dictate to God that he must send one of his angels down to tell you he has forgiven you. Now rest assured God will have nothing to do with your dictation. With your desire to be saved he will have to do, but with your planning as to how he should save you, he will have nought to do. Oh, be content to get salvation anyhow if thou dost but get it. If thou canst not have it like the prodigal son, who felt his father's arms about him, and knew his father's kiss, and had music and dancing in the moment that he was restored—if thou canst not come in by the front door, be content to enter at the back. If Mercy comes on foot do not despise her, for she is just as fair as when she rides in her chariot. Be content to go in sackcloth before God, and there to bemoan thy guilt and to lay hold on him who taketh away the sin of the world. Sinner, believe in Christ. That is God's command, and thy privilege. Cast thyself flat on his atonement; trust thou him and him alone and if God choose not to comfort thee in the way in which thou hast expected, yet be content to get the blessing anyhow so long as thou receivest it at all. Limit not, I beseech thee, the Holy One of Israel.

Upon this point of dictation I might tarry very long and give many instances. But I choose rather to close up this first head of my discourse by observing once again, what a heinous offense, what an unreasonable iniquity it is for any of us to attempt to dictate to God. Oh man, know that he is sovereign.

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might."

Wilt thou, a beggar, dictate to the King of kings, the Lord of lords, when the angels veil their faces before him, and scarcely dare to look upon his brightness? Wilt thou dare to lord it over him, and command thy Maker? Shall infinite wisdom stoop to obey thy folly, and shall divine goodness be cooped and caged and imprisoned within the bars of thy frantic desires. What! dost thou dare to mount the steps of his throne, and affront him with thy haughty speeches, when cherubim dare not look upon his brightness—when the pillars of heaven's starry roof tremble and start at his reproof! Wilt thou seek to be greater than he is? Shall mortal man be greater than his God? Shall he dictate to the everlasting—he who is born of a woman and of few days, and full of folly? No go thou to his throne, bow thyself reverently before him; give up thy will, let it be bound in golden

fetters a bond-slave to God. Cry thou this day, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner, and let it be not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Thus, then, I have discoursed on the first part of the subject.

II. In the second place, we limit the Holy One of Israel by DISTRUST. And here again I will divide my congregation into the two grand classes of saints and sinners. Children of God, purchased by blood and regenerated by the Spirit, you are guilty here; for by your distrust and fear you have often limited the Holy One of Israel, and have said in effect, that his ear is heavy that it cannot hear, and that his arm is shortened that it cannot save. In your trials you have done this. You have looked upon your troubles, you have seen them roll like mountain waves; you have hearkened to your fears, and they have howled in your ears like tempestuous winds, and you have said, "My bark is but a feeble one, and it will soon be ship-wrecked. It is true that God has said that through tempests and tossings he will bring me to my desired haven. But alas! such a state as this was never contemplated in his promise; I shall sink at last and never see his face with joy." What hast thou done, fearful one? O thou of little faith, dost thou know what sin thou best committed? Thou hast judged the omnipotence of God to be finite. Thou hast said that thy troubles are greater than his power, that thy woes are more terrible than his might. I say retract that thought; drown it and thou shalt not be drowned thyself. Give it to the winds, and rest thou assured that out of all thy troubles he will surely bring thee, and in thy deepest distress he will not forsake thee.

But says one, "I did believe this once, and I had hoped for an escape from my present predicament, but that escape has failed me. I did think that some friend would have assisted me, and thus, I imagined I should have come out of the furnace." Ah! and thou art distrusting God because he does not choose to use the means which thou hast chosen; because his election and thy election are not the same, therefore thou doubttest him. Why man, he is not limited to means—to any means, much less to one of thy choosing. If he deliver thee not by calming the tempest, he hath a better way in store; he will send from above and deliver thee; he will snatch thee out of the deep waters lest the floods overflow thee. What might Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego have said? Suppose they had got it into their heads that God would deliver them in some particular way. They did have some such idea, but they said, as if to prove that they trusted not really to their thought about the deliverance—"Nevertheless, be it known unto thee, O king, we will not worship thy gods, nor bow before the image which thou hast set up." They were prepared to let God have his will, even though he used no means of deliverance. But suppose, I say, they had conferred with flesh and blood, and Shadrach had said, "God will strike Nebuchadnezzar dead; just at the moment when the men are about to put us into the furnace the king will turn pale and die, and so we shall escape." O my friends, they would have trembled indeed when they went into the furnace if they had chosen their own means of deliverance, and the king had remained alive. But instead of this, they gave themselves up to God, though he did not deliver them. And, though he did not prevent their going into the furnace, yet he kept them alive in it, so that not so much as the smell of fire had passed upon them. It shall be even so with you. Repose in God. When thou seest him not, believe him; when everything seems to contradict thy faith, still stagger not at the promise. If HE hath said it, he can find ways and means to do it. Rest assured, sinner, he would come from his throne to do it himself in person, rather than suffer his promises to be unfulfilled. The harps of heaven should sooner lament an absent God than thou shouldst have to mourn a broken promise. Trust in him, repose constantly on him, and limit not the Holy One of Israel. Do you not think that the church as a great body has done this? We do not any of us expect to hear that a nation is born in a day. If it

should be said that in a certain chapel in London this morning some thousand souls had been converted under one sermon, we should shake our heads incredulously, and say it cannot be. We have a notion that because we have only had drops of mercy of late, we are never to have showers of it; because mercy seems only to have come in little rills and trickling streamlets, we have conceived the idea that it never can roll its mighty floods like the huge rivers of the western world. No, we have limited the Holy One of Israel; especially as preachers have we done it. We do not expect our ministry to be blessed, and therefore it is not blessed. If we had learned to expect great things we should have them. If we had made up our minds to this, that the promise was great, that the Promiser was great, that his faithfulness was great, and that his power was great; and if with this for our strength we set to work expecting a great blessing, I trow we should not be disappointed. But the universal church of Christ hath limited the Holy One of Israel. Why, my friends, if God should will it, ye need not ask where are to come the successors of such and such a man. Ye need not sit down and ask when such and such a one is gone where shall be another who shall preach the word with power. When God gives the word, great shall be the multitude of them that publish it; and when the multitude shall begin to publish, believe me, God can move thousands as easily as he can move tens, and where our baptismal pool hath been stirred by ones and twos he can bid millions descend to be baptized into our holy faith. Limit not, O limit not, thou church of the living God, limit not the Holy One of Israel.

And now I turn to the poor troubled heart, and although I accuse of sin, yet I doubt not the Spirit shall bear witness with the conscience, and leading to Christ, shall this morning deliver from its galling yoke. Poor troubled one, thou hast said in thy heart, "my sins are too many to be forgiven." What hast thou done? Repent thee, and let the tear roll down thy cheek. Thou hast limited the Holy One of Israel. Thou hast put thy sins above his grace. Thou hast considered that thy guilt is more omnipotent than omnipotence itself. He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Christ. Thou canst not have exceeded the boundlessness of his grace. Be thy sins ever so many, the blood of Christ can put them all away; and if thou doubtst this, thou art limiting the Holy One of Israel. Another says, I do not doubt his power to save, but what I doubt is his willingness. What hast thou done in this? Thou hast limited the love, the boundless love of the Holy One of Israel. What, dost thou stand on the shore of a love which ever must be shoreless. Was it deep enough and broad enough to cover the iniquities of Paul, and doth it stop just where thou art? Why thou art the limit, then; thou standest as the limiting landmark of the grace of the Holy One of Israel! Out upon thy folly! get rid of this thy mistrust. He whom love has embraced the chief of sinners, is willing to embrace thee, if now hating thy sin and leaving thy iniquity, thou art ready to put thy trust in Jesus. I beseech thee, limit not the Holy One of Israel by thinking he is unwilling to forgive. Are you really conscious of the sin you are committing when you think God unwilling to save? Why you are accusing God of being a liar. Does not that alarm you? You have done worse than this, you have even accused him of being perjured, for you doubt his oath. "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." You do not believe that? then you make God to be perjured. Oh! tremble at such guilt as this, "No, but," you say, "I would not accuse him; but he would be quite just if he were unwilling to save me." I am glad thou sayest that; that proves thou dost not accuse his justice. But I still say thou art limiting his love. What doth he say himself? hath he limited it? Hath he not himself said, "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!" And thou art thirsty, and yet thou thinkest

that his love cannot reach to thee. Oh! while God assures thee that thou art welcome, be not wicked enough to throw the lie in the teeth of mercy. Limit not the Holy One of Israel. "But, sir, I am such an old sinner." Yea, but limit not God. "But I am such a black sinner." Limit not the efficacy of the cleansing blood. "But I have aggravated him so much." Limit not his infinite longsuffering. "But my heart is so hard." Limit not the melting power of his grace, "But I am so sinful." Limit not the potency of the atonement. "But, sir, I am so hard-hearted, and I feel so little my need of him." Limit not the influences of the Spirit by thy folly or thy stubbornness but come as thou art, and put thy trust in Christ, and so honor God and he will not dishonor thy faith.

If you will but now for half a moment consider how faithful God has been to his children and how true he has been to all his promises, I think that saint and sinner may stand together and make a common confession and utter a common prayer: "Lord, we have been guilty of doubting thee; we pray that we may limit thee no longer." Oh! remember, remember more and more God's Love and goodness to his ancient people, remember how he delivered them many a time, how he brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm; think how he fed them in the wilderness, how he carried them all the days of old; remember his faithfulness to his covenant and to his servant Abraham, and say will he leave you, will he forget his covenant sealed with blood will he be unmindful of his promise, will he be slow to answer or slack to deliver? Scout the thought, drive it far away, and now come, and at the foot of the cross renew your faith; in the sight of the flowing wounds renew your confidence and say, "Jesus, we put our trust in thee; thy Father's grace can never fail, thou hast loved us, and thou wilt love us despite our sins, thou wilt present us at last before thy Father's face in glory everlasting."

III. And now, to conclude, I want your solemn attention while I address myself to a very small number of person here present, for whose sorrowful state I feel the greatest pity. It has been my mournful duty as pastor of so large a congregation, to have to deal with desperate cases. Here and there, there are men and women who have come into a state which, without meaning to wound them, I am free to confess I think, is sullen DESPAIR. They feel that they are guilty; they know that Christ is able to save; they also doctrinally understand the duty of faith, and its power to bring peace but they persevere in the declaration that there is no mercy for them. In vain you find out a parallel case; they soon discover some little discrepancy and so escape you. The most mighty promises lose all their force because they turn their edge by the declaration—"That does not mean me." They read in the Word of God that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" they are sinners, but they cannot think he came to save them. They know right well that he is able to save them to the uttermost; they would not say they had gone beyond the uttermost, but still they think so. They cannot imagine that free grace and sovereign love can ever come to them. They have, it is true, their gleams of sunshine, sometimes they believe, but when the comfortable presence of God is gone, they relapse into their old despair. Let me speak very tenderly, and O that the Spirit of God would speak also! My dear brother and sister, what art thou doing? I ask thee; what art thou doing?—if thou art not limiting the Holy One of Israel? Wouldst thou dishonor God? "No," sayest thou, "I would not." But thou art doing it. Thou art saying that God cannot save thee, or if not saying that, thou art implying—that all the torture thou hast felt in thy conscience, and all the anxiety thou hast in thy heart, have never yet moved God to look on thee. Why, thou makest God to be the most hard-hearted of all beings. If thou shouldst hear another groan as thou art groaning, thou wouldst weep over him; but thou thinkest that God looks on thee with cold indifference, and will never hear thy prayer. This is not only limiting—it is slandering the Holy One of Israel. Oh, come

forth, I beseech you, and dare to believe a good thing of thy God. Dare to believe this, that he is willing now to save thee—that now he will put away thy sins. “But suppose, sir, I should believe something too good?” Nay, that thou canst not do. Think of God as being the most loving, the most tender-hearted being that can be, and thou hast thought just rightly of him. Think of him as having a mother’s heart, that mourns over its sick babe; think of him as having a father’s heart, pitying his children; think of him as having a husband’s heart, loving his spouse and cherishing her, and thou hast just thought rightly of him. Think of him as being one who will not look on thy sins, but who casts them behind his back. Dare for once to give God a little honor. Come, put the crown on his head; say, “Lord, I am the vilest rebel out of hell, the most hard-hearted, the most full of blasphemous thoughts; I am the most wicked, the most abandoned; Lord let me have the honor now of being able to say, Thou art able to save even me; and on thy boundless love, thy great, thine infinite grace, do I rely.” One of Charles Wesley’s hymns, which I forget just now, has in it an expression something like this—Lord, if there be a sinner in the world more needy than I am, then refuse me; if there be one more undeserving than I am, then cast me away; if there be one that needs grace and mercy, pity and compassion, more than I, then pass me by. “But, Lord,” says he in his song, “thou knowest I the chief of sinners am, the vilest of the vile, the most hardened, and the most senseless, then, Lord, glorify thyself by showing to men, to angels, and to devils, what thy right hand can do. May the Holy Ghost enable thee now to come forth from the dungeon of despair, and no longer limit the Holy One of Israel.

I shall add no more, but leave the effect of this sermon with my God. May every one of us believe him better, and have greater thoughts of him, and never let us be guilty henceforth of confining, as it were, within iron bonds the limitless One of Israel.

Christ Triumphant

A Sermon

(No. 273)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 4th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”—Colossians 2:15.

TO THE EYE OF REASON the cross is the centre of sorrow and the lowest depth of shame. Jesus dies a malefactor's death. He hangs upon the gibbet of a felon and pours out his blood upon the common mount of doom with thieves for his companions. In the midst of mockery, and jest, and scorn, and ribaldry, and blasphemy, he gives up the ghost. Earth rejects him and lifts him from her surface, and heaven affords him no light, but darkens the mid-day sun in the hour of his extremity. Deeper in woe the Saviour dived, imagination cannot descend. A blacker calumny than was cast on him satanic malice could not invent. He hid not his face from shame and spitting; and what shame and spitting it was! To the world the cross must ever be the emblem of shame: to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness. How different however is the view which presents itself to the eye of faith. Faith knows no shame in the cross, except the shame of those who nailed the Saviour there; it sees no ground for scorn, but it hurls indignant scorn at sin, the enemy which pierced the Lord. Faith sees woe, indeed, but from this woe it marks a fount of mercy springing. It is true it mourns a dying Saviour, but it beholds him bringing life and immortality to light at the very moment when his soul was eclipsed in the shadow of death. Faith regards the cross, not as the emblem of shame, but as the token of glory. The sons of Belial lay the cross in the dust, but the Christian makes a constellation of it, and sees it glittering in the seventh heaven. Man spits upon it, but believers, having angels for their companions, bow down and worship him who ever liveth though once he was crucified. My brethren, our text presents us with a portion of the view which faith is certain to discover when its eyes are anointed with the eye-salve of the Spirit. It tells us that the cross was Jesus Christ's field of triumph. There he fought, and there he conquered, too. As a victor on the cross he divided the spoil. Nay, more than this; in our text the cross is spoken of as being Christ's triumphal chariot in which he rode when he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. Calvin thus admirably expounds the last sentence of our text:—“the expression in the Greek allows, it is true, of our reading—*in himself*; the connection of the passage, however, requires that we read it otherwise; for what would be meagre as applied to Christ, suits admirably well as applied to the cross. For as he had previously compared the cross to a signal trophy or show of triumph, in which Christ led about his enemies, so he now also compares it to a triumphal car in which he showed himself in great magnificence. For there is no tribunal so magnificent, no throne so stately, no show of triumph so distinguished, no chariot so elevated, as is the gibbet on which Christ has subdued death and the devil, the prince of death; nay, more, has utterly trodden them under his feet.”

I shall this morning, by God's help, address you upon the two portions of the text. First, I shall endeavour to describe *Christ as spoiling his enemies on the cross*; and having done that I shall lead

your imagination and your faith further on to see *the Saviour in triumphal procession upon his cross*, leading his enemies captive, and making a shew of them openly before the eyes of the astonished universe.

I. First, our faith is invited this morning to behold CHRIST MAKING A SPOIL OF PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS. Satan, leagued with sin and death, had made this world the home of woe. The Prince of the power of the air, fell usurper, not content with his dominions in hell, must need invade this fair earth. He found our first parents in the midst of Edem; he tempted them to forego their allegiance to the King of heaven; and they became at once his bondslaves—bondslaves forever, if the Lord of heaven had not interposed to ransom them. The voice of mercy was heard while the fetters were being rivetted upon their feet, crying, “*Ye shall yet be free!*” In the fulness of time there shall come one who shall bruise the serpent’s head, and shall deliver his prisoners from the house of their bondage. Long did the promise tarry. The earth groaned and travailed in its bondage. Man was Satan’s slave, and heavy were the clanking chains which were upon his soul. At last, in the fulness of time, the Deliverer came forth, born of a woman. This infant conqueror was but a span long. He lay in the manger—*he* who was one day to bind the old dragon and cast him into the bottomless pit, and set a seal upon him. When the old serpent knew that his enemy was born, he conspired to put him to death; he leagued with Herod to seek the young child that he might destroy him. But the providence of God preserved the future conqueror; he went down into Egypt, and there was he hidden for a little season. Anon, when he had come to fulness of years, he made his public advent, and began to preach liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Then Satan again shot forth his arrows, and sought to end the existence of the woman’s seed. Once the Jews took up stones to stone him; nor did they fail to repeat the attempt. They sought to cast him down from the brow of a hill headlong. By all manner of devices they laboured to take away his life, but his hour was not yet. Dangers might surround him, but he was invulnerable till the time was come. At last the tremendous day arrived. Foot to foot the conqueror must fight with the dread tyrant. A voice was heard in heaven, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” And Christ himself exclaimed, “Now is the crisis of this world; now must the prince of darkness be cast out.” From the table of communion the Redeemer arose at midnight, and marched forth to the battle. How dreadful was the contest! In the very first onset the mighty conqueror seemed himself to be vanquished. Beaten to the earth at the first assault, he fell upon his knees and cried, “My Father, if it be possible let this cup passd from me.” Revived in strength, made strong by heaven, he no longer quailed, and from this hour never did he utter a word which looked like renouncing the fight. From the terrible skirmish all red with bloody sweat, he dashed into the thick of the battle. The kiss of Judas was, as it were, the first sounding of the trumpet; Pilate’s bar was the glittering of the spear; the cruel lash was the crossing of the swords. But the cross was the centre of the battle; there, on the top of Calvary, must the dread fight of eternity be fought. Now must the Son of God arise, and gird his sword upon his thigh. Dread defeat or glorious conquest awaits the Champion of the church. Which shall it be? We hold our breath with anxious suspense while the storm is raging. I hear the trumpet sound. The howlings and yells of hell rise in awful clamour. The pit is emptying out its legions. Terrible as lions, hungry as wolves, and black as night, the demons rush on in myriads. Satan’s reserve forces, those who had long been kept against this day of terrible battle, are roaring from their dens. See how countless their armies, and how fierce their countenances. Brandishing his sword the arch fiend leads the van, bidding his followers fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel. Terrible are the

leaders of the battle. Sin is there, and all its innumerable offspring, spitting forth the venom of asps, and infixing their poison-fangs in the Saviour's flesh. Death is there upon his pale horse, and his cruel dart rends its way through the body of Jesus even to his inmost heart. He is "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Hell comes, with all its coals of juniper and fiery darts. But chief and head amongst them is Satan; remembering well the ancient day Christ hurled him from the battlements of heaven, he rushes with all his malice yelling to the attack. The darts shot into the air are so thick that they blind the sun. Darkness covers the battle-field, and like that of Egypt it was a darkness which might be felt. Long does the battle seem to waver, for there is but one against many. One man—nay, tell it, lest any should misunderstand me, one *God* stands in battle array against ten thousands of principalities and powers. On, on they come, and he receives them all. Silently at first he permits their ranks to break upon him, too terribly enduring hardness to spare a thought for shouting. But at last the battle-cry is heard. He who is fighting for his people begins to shout, but it is a shout which makes the church tremble. He cries, "I thirst." The battle is so hot upon him, and the dust so thick that he is choked with thirst. He cries, "I thirst." Surely, now, he is about to be defeated? Wait awhile; see ye yon heaps; all these have fallen beneath his arm, as for the rest fear not the issue. The enemy is but rushing to his own destruction. In vain his fury and his rage, for see the last rank is charging, the battle of ages is almost over. At last the darkness is dispersed. Hark how the conqueror cries, "It is finished." And where now are his enemies? They are all dead. There lies the king of terrors, pierced through with one of his own darts! There lies Satan with his head all bleeding, broken! Yonder crawls the broken-backed serpent, writhing in ghastly misery! As for sin, it is cut in pieces, and scattered to the winds of heaven! "*It is finished,*" cries the conqueror, as he came with dyed garments from Bozrah, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, I have trampled them in my fury, and their blood is sprinkled on my garments."

And now he proceeds to *divide the spoil*.

We pause here to remark that when the spoil is divided it is a sure token that the battle is completely won. The enemy will never suffer the spoil to be divided among the conquerors as long as he has any strength remaining. We may gather from our text of a surety, that Jesus Christ has totally routed, thoroughly defeated once for all, and put to retreat all his enemies, or else he would not have divided the spoil.

And now, what means this expression of Christ dividing the spoil? I take it that it means, first of all, that *he disarmed all his enemies*. Satan came against Christ; he had in his hand a sharp sword called the Law, dipped in the poison of sin, so that every wound which the law inflicted was deadly. Christ dashed this sword out of Satan's hand, and there stood the prince of darkness disarmed. His helmet was cleft in twain, and his head was crushed with a rod of iron. Death rose against Christ. The Savior snatched his quiver from him, cut them in two, gave Death back the feather end, but kept the poisoned barbs from him, that he might never destroy the ransomed. Sin came against Christ; but sin was utterly cut in pieces. It had been Satan's armour bearer, but its shield was cast away, and it lay dead upon the plain. Is it not a noble picture to behold all the enemies of Christ?—nay, my brethren, all your enemies, and mine, totally disarmed? Satan has nothing left him now wherewith he may attack us. He may attempt to injure us, but wound us he never can, for his sword and spear are utterly taken away. In the old battles, especially among the Romans, after the enemy had been overcome, it was the custom to take away all their weapons and ammunition; afterwards they were stripped of their armour and their garments, their hands were tied behind their backs, and they were made to pass under the yoke. Now, even so hath Christ done with sin, death,

and hell: he hath taken away their armour, spoiled them of all their weapons, and made them all to pass under the yoke; so that now they are our slaves, and we in Christ are conquerors of them who were mightier than we.

I take it this is the first meaning of dividing the spoil—total disarming of the adversary.

In the next place, when the victors divide the spoil they carry away not only the weapons but all the treasures which belong to their enemies. They dismantle their fortresses, and rifle all their stores, so that in future they may not be able to renew the attack. Christ has done the like with all his enemies. Old Satan had taken away from us all our possessions. Paradise, Satan had added to his territories. All the joy, and happiness, and peace of man, Satan had taken—not that he could enjoy them himself, but that he delighted to thrust us down into poverty and damnation. Now, all our lost inheritances Christ hath gotten back to us. Paradise is ours, more than all the joy and happiness that Adam had, Christ hath brought back to us. O robber of our race, how art thou spoiled and carried away captive! Didst thou despoil Adam of his riches? The second Adam hath rent them from thee! How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken, and the waster is become desolate. Now shall the needy be remembered, and again shall the meek inherit the earth. “Then is the prey of a great spoil divided, the lame take the prey.”

Moreover, when victors divide the spoil, it is usual to take away all the ornaments from the enemy, the crowns and the jewels. Christ on the cross did the like with Satan. Satan had a crown on his head, a haughty diadem of triumph. “I fought the first Adam,” he said; “I overcame him, and here’s my glittering diadem.” Christ snatched it from his brow in the hour when he bruised the serpent’s head. And now Satan cannot boast of a single victory, he is thoroughly defeated. In the first skirmish he vanquished manhood, but in the second battle manhood vanquished him. The crown is taken from Satan. He is no longer the prince of God’s people. His reigning power is gone. He may tempt, but he cannot compel; he may threaten, but he cannot subdue; for the crown is taken from his head, and the mighty are brought low. O sing unto the Lord a new song, all ye his people, make a joyful noise unto him with psalms, all ye his redeemed; for he hath broken in sunder the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron, he hath broken the bow and cut the spear in sunder, he hath burned the chariots in the fire, he hath dashed in pieces our enemies, and divided the spoil with the strong.

And now, what says this to us? Simply this. If Christ on the cross hath spoiled Satan, let us not be afraid to encounter this great enemy of our souls. My brethren, in all things we must be made like unto Christ. We must bear our cross, and on that cross we must fight as he did with sin, and death and hell. Let us not fear. The result of the battle is certain, for as the Lord our Saviour hath overcome once even so shall we most surely conquer in him. Be none of you afraid with sudden fear when the evil one cometh upon you. If he accuse you, reply to him in these words:—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” If he condemn you, laugh him to scorn, crying:—“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather hath risen again.” If he threaten to divide you from Christ’s love, encounter him with confidence:—“I am persuaded that neither things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord.” If he let loose your sins upon you dash the hell-dogs aside with this:—“if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” If death should threaten you, shout in his very face:—“O grave where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory?” Hold up the cross before you. Let that be your shield and buckler and rest assured that as your master not only routed the foe but afterwards took the

spoil, it shall be even so with you. Your battles with Satan shall turn to your advantage. You shall become all the richer for your antagonists. The more numerous they shall be, the greater shall be your share of the spoil. Your tribulation shall work patience, and your patience experience, and your experience hope—a hope that maketh not ashamed. Through this much tribulation shall you inherit the kingdom, and by the very attacks of Satan shall you be helped the better to enjoy the rest which remaineth to the people of God. Put yourselves in array against sin and Satan. All ye that bend the bow shoot at them, spare no arrows, for your enemies are rebels against God. Go ye up against them, put your feet upon their necks, fear not, neither be ye dismayed, for the battle is the Lord's and he will deliver them into your hands. Be ye very courageous, remembering that you have to fight with a stingless dragon. He may hiss, but his teeth are broken and his poison fang extracted. You have to battle with an enemy already scarred by your Master's weapons. You have to fight with a naked enemy. Every blow you give him tells upon him. for he has nothing left to protect him. Christ hath stripped him naked, and divided his armour, and left him defenceless before his people. Be not afraid. The lion may howl, but rend you in pieces he never can. The enemy may rush in upon you with hideous noise and terrible alarms, but there is no real cause for fear. Stand fast in the Lord. Ye war against a king who hath lost his crown; ye fight against an enemy whose cheek-bones have been smitten, and the joints of whose loins have been loosed. Rejoice, rejoice ye in the day of battle, for it is for you but the beginning of an eternity of triumph.

I have thus endeavoured to dwell upon the first part of the text, Christ on the cross divided the spoil and he would have us do the same.

II. The second part of our text refers not only to the dividing of the spoil, but to **THE TRIUMPH**. When a Roman general had performed great feats in a foreign country, his highest reward was that the senate should decree him a triumph. Of course there was a division of spoil made on the battle-field, and each soldier, and each captain, took his share; but every man looked rapturously to the day when they should enjoy the public triumph. On a certain set day the gates of Rome were thrown open; all the houses were decorated with ornaments; the people climbed to the tops of the houses, or stood in great crowds along the streets. The gates were opened, and by-and-bye the first legion began to stream in with its banners flying and its trumpets sounding. The people saw the stern warriors as they marched along the street returning from their blood-red fields of battle. After one half of the army had thus defiled, your eye would rest upon one who was the centre of all attraction: riding in a noble chariot drawn by milk-white horses, there came the conqueror himself, crowned with the laurel crown and standing erect. Chained to his chariot were the kings and mighty men of the regions which he had conquered. Immediately behind them came part of the booty. There were carried the ivory and the ebony, and the beasts of the different countries which he had subdued. After these came the rest of the soldiery, a long, long stream of valiant men, all of them sharing the triumphs of their captain. Behind them came banners, the old flags that had floated aloft in the battle, the standards which had been taken from the enemy. And after these, large painted emblems of the great victories of the warrior. Upon one there would be a huge map depicting the rivers which he had crossed, or the seas through which his navy had found its way. Everything was represented in a picture, and the populace gave a fresh shout as they saw the memorial of each triumph. And then, behind, together with the trophies, would come the prisoners of lesser rank. Then the rear would be closed with sound of trumpet, adding to the acclamation of the throng. It was a noble day for old Rome. Children would never forget these triumphs; they would estimate

their years from the time of one triumph to another. High holiday was kept. Women cast down flowers before the conqueror, and he was the true monarch of the day.

Now, our apostle had evidently seen such a triumph, or read of it, and he takes this as a representation of what Christ did on the cross. He says, "Jesus made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Have you ever thought that the cross could be the scene of a triumph. Most of the old commentators can scarcely conceive of it as true. They say, "This must certainly refer to Christ's resurrection and ascension." But, nevertheless, so saith the Scripture, even on the cross Christ enjoyed a triumph. Yes! while those hands were bleeding, the acclamations of angels were being poured on his head. Yes, while those feet were being rent with the nails, the noblest spirits in the world were crowding round him in admiration. And when upon that blood-stained cross he died in agonies unutterable, there was heard a shout such as never was heard before for the ransomed in heaven, and all the angels of God with loudest harmony chanted his praise. There was sung, in fullest chorus, the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb, for he had indeed cut Rahab and sorely wounded the dragon. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

I do not feel able, however, this morning, to work out a scene so grand, and yet so contrary to everything that flesh could guess as a picture of Christ actually triumphing on the cross—in the midst of his bleeding, his wounds, and his pains, actually being a triumphant victor, and admired of all. I choose, rather, to take my text thus: the cross is the ground of Christ's ultimate triumph. He may be said to have really triumphed there, because it was by that one act of his, that one offering of himself, that he completely vanquished all his foes, and for ever sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. In the cross, to the spiritual eye, every victory of Christ is contained. It may not be there in fact, but it is there virtually; the germ of his glories may be discovered by the eye of faith in the agonies of the cross.

Bear with me while I humbly attempt to depict the triumph which now results from the cross.

Christ has for ever overcome all his foes, and divided the spoil upon the battle field, and now, even at this day is he enjoying the well-earned reward and triumph of his fearful struggle. Lift up your eyes to the battlements of heaven, the great metropolis of God. The pearly gates are wide open, and the city shines with her bejewelled walls like a bride prepared for her husband. Do you see the angels crowding to the battlements? Do you observe them on every mansion of the celestial city, eagerly desiring and looking for something which has not yet arrived? At last, there is heard the sound of a trumpet, and the angels hurry to the gates—the vanguard of the redeemed is approaching the city. Abel comes in alone, clothed in a crimson garb, the herald of a glorious army of martyrs. Hark to the shout of acclamation! This is the first of Christ's warriors, at once a soldier and a trophy, that has been delivered. Close at his heels there follow others, who in those early times had learned of the coming Saviour's fame. Behind them a mighty host may be discovered of patriarchal veterans, who have witnessed to the coming of the Lord in a wanton age. See Enoch still walking with his God, and singing sweetly—"Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." There too is Noah, who had sailed in the ark with the Lord as his pilot. Then follow Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Joshua, and Samuel, and David, all mighty men of valour. Harken to them as they enter! Every one of them waving his helmet in the air, cries, "Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be honour, and glory, and dominion, and power, for ever and ever!" Look, my brethren, with admiration upon this noble army! Mark the heroes as they march along the golden streets, everywhere meeting with an

enthusiastic welcome from the angels who have kept their first estate. On, on they pour, those countless legions—was there ever such a spectacle? It is not the pageant of a day, but the “show” of all time. For four thousand years, on streams the army of Christ’s redeemed. Sometimes there is a short rank, for the people have often been minished and brought low; but, anon, a crowd succeeds them, and on, on, still on they come, all shouting, all praising him who loved them and gave himself for them. But, see, *he* comes! I see his immediate herald, clad in a garment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins. The Prince of the house of David is not far behind. Let every eye be open. Now, mark, how not only the angels, but the redeemed crowd the windows of heaven! He comes! He comes! It is Christ himself! Lash the snow-white coursers up the everlasting hills; “Lift up you heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.” See, he enters in the midst of acclamations. It is he! but he is not crowned with thorns. It is he! but though his hands wear the scar, they are stained with blood no longer. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and on his head are many crowns, and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. He stands aloft in that chariot which is “paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.” Clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, he stands confessed the emperor of heaven and earth. On, on he rides, and louder than the noise of many waters and like great thunders are the acclamations which surround him! See how John’s vision is become a reality, for now we can see for ourselves and hear with our ears the new song, whereof he writes, “They sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” But who are these at his chariot wheels? Who are these grim monsters that come howling in the rear? I know them. First of all there is the arch enemy. Look at the old serpent, bound and fettered, how he writhes his ragged length along! his azure hues all tarnished with trailing in the dust, his scales despoiled of their once-vaunted brightness. Now is captivity led captive, and death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire. With what derision is the chief of rebels regarded. How is he become the object of everlasting contempt. He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh, and the Lord doth have him in derision. Behold now how the serpent’s head is broken, and the dragon is trampled under foot. And now regard attentively yon hideous monster, *Sin*, chained hand in hand with his satanic sire. See how he rolls his fiery eye-balls, mark how he twists and writhes in agonies. Mark how he glares upon the holy city, but is unable to spit his venom there, for he is chained and gagged, and dragged along an unwilling captive at the wheels of the victor. And there, too, is old Death, with his darts all broken and his hands behind him—the grim king of terrors, he too is a captive. Hark to the songs of the redeemed, of those who have entered in Paradise, as they see these mighty prisoners dragged along! “Worthy is he,” they shout, “to live and reign at his Almighty Father’s side, for he hath ascended up on high, he hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men.”

And now behind him I see the great mass of his people streaming in. The apostles are the first to arrive in one goodly fellowship hymning their Lord; and then their immediate successors; and then a long array of those who through cruel mockings and blood, through flame and sword, have followed their Master. These are those of whom the world was not worthy, brightest among the stars of heaven. Regard also the mighty preachers and confessors of the faith, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Augustine, and the like. Witness their holy unanimity in praising their Lord. Then let your eye run along the glittering ranks till you come to the days of Reformation. I see in the midst of the squadron, Luther, Calvin, and Zwingle, three holy brothers. I see just before them Wickliffe, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, all marching together. And then I see a number that no man can number, converted to God through these mighty reformers, who now follow in the rear of the King of kings and Lord of lords. And looking down to our own time I see the stream broader and wider. For many are the soldiers who have in these last times entered into their Master's triumph. We may mourn their absence from *us*, but we must rejoice in their presence with the *Lord*. But what is the unanimous shout, what is the one song that still rolls from the first rank to the last? It is this: "Unto him that loved us, washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!" Have they changed the tune? Have they supplanted his name by another? Have they put the crown upon another head, or elevated another hero into the chariot? Ah, no: they are content still to let the triumphant procession stream along its glorious length; still to rejoice as they behold fresh trophies of his love, for every soldier is a trophy, every warrior in Christ's army is another proof of his power to save, and his victory over death and hell.

I have not the time to enlarge further, or else I might describe the mighty pictures at the end of the procession; for in the old Roman triumphs, the deeds of the conqueror were all depicted in paintings. The towns he had taken, the rivers he had passed, the provinces he had subdued, the battles he had fought, were represented in pictures and exposed to the view of the people, who with great festivity and rejoicing, accompanied him in throngs, or beheld him from the windows of their houses, and filled the air with their acclamations and applauses. I might present to you first of all the picture of hell's dungeons blown to atoms. Satan had prepared deep in the depth of darkness a prison-house for God's elect; but Christ has not left one stone upon another. On the picture I see the chains broken in pieces, the prison doors burnt with fire, and all the depths of the vasty deep shaken to their foundations. On another picture I see heaven open to all believers; I see the gates that were fast shut heaved open by the golden lever of Christ's atonement. I see one, another picture, the grave despoiled; I behold Jesus in it, slumbering for awhile, and then rolling away the stone and rising to immortality and glory. But we cannot stay to describe these mighty pictures of the victories of his love. We know that the time shall come when the triumphant procession shall cease, when the last of his redeemed shall have entered into the city of happiness and joy, and when with the shout of a trumpet heard for the last time, he shall ascend into heaven, and take his people up to reign with God, even our Father, even for ever and ever, world without end.

Our only question, and with that we conclude, is, have we a good hope through grace that we shall march in that tremendous procession? Shall we pass under view in that day of pomp and glory? Say, my soul, shalt thou have an humble part in that glorious pageant? Wilt thou follow at his chariot wheels? Wilt thou join in the thundering hosannas? Shall thy voice help to swell the everlasting chorus? Sometimes, I fear it shall not. There are times when the awful question comes—what if my name should be left out when he should read the muster roll? Brethren, does not that thought trouble you? Can you answer it? Will you be there—shall you see this pomp? Will

you behold him triumph over sin, death and hell at last? Canst thou answer this question? There is another, but the answer will serve for both—dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Is he thy confidence and thy trust? Hast thou committed thy soul to his keeping? Reposing on his might canst thou say for thine immortal spirit—

“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee?”

If thou canst say that, thine eyes shall see him in the day of his glory; nay, thou shalt share his glory, and sit with him upon his throne, even as he has overcome and sits down with his Father upon his throne. I blush to preach as I have done this morning on a theme far beyond my power; yet I could not leave it unsung, but, as best I might, sing it. May God enlarge your faith, and strengthen your hope, and inflame your love, and make you ready to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, that when he shall come with flying clouds on wings of wind, ye may be ready to meet him, and may with him ascend to gaze for ever on the vision of his glory.

May God grant this blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Paul's Desire to Depart

A Sermon

(No. 274)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 11th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.”—Philippians 1:23.

WE KNOW THAT DEATH is not the end of our being. By a confident faith we are persuaded that better things await us in another state. We are speeding onwards through our brief life like an arrow shot from a bow, and we feel that we shall not drop down at the end of our flight into the dreariness of annihilation, but we shall find a heavenly target far across the flood of death. The force which impels us onwards is too mighty to be restrained by death. We have that within us which is not to be accounted for, if there be not a world to come, and especially, as believers, we have hopes, and desires, and aspirations, which cannot be fulfilled, and which must have been given us purposely to make us miserable, and to tantalize us, if there be not a state in which every one of these shall be satisfied and filled to the brim with Joy. We know, too, that the world into which we shall soon be ushered is one which shall never pass away. We have learned full well by experience that all things here are but for a season. They are things which shall be shaken, and, therefore, will not remain in the day when God shall shake both heaven and earth. But equally certain are we that the inheritance which awaits us in the world to come is eternal and unfailing, that the cycles of ages shall never move it; that the onflowing of eternity itself shall not diminish its duration. We know that the world to which we go is not to be measured by leagues, nor is the life thereof to be calculated by centuries. Well does it become every one of us, then, professing the Christian name, to be questioning ourselves as to the view which we take of the world to come. It may be there are some of you now present who call yourselves believers, who look into a future state with shuddering and awe. Possibly there may be but few here who have attained to the position of the apostle, when he could say, that he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ. I take it that our view of our own death is one of the readiest tokens by which we may judge of our own spiritual condition. When men fear death it is not certain that they are wicked, but it is quite certain that if they have faith it is in a very weak and sickly condition. When men desire death we may not rest assured that they are therefore righteous, for they may desire it for wrong reasons; but if for right reasons they are panting to enter into another state, we may gather from this, not only that their minds are right with God, but that their faith is sanctified and that their love is fervent.

I hope that the service of this morning may have the effect of leading every one of us to self-examination. I shall endeavor while preaching to search myself, and I pray that each one of you may be led to hear for himself, and I beseech you to put home each pertinent and personal question to your own souls, while in a quiet, but I hope in a forcible manner, I shall endeavor to describe the apostle's feelings in prospect of departure.

Three things I shall observe this morning. First of all, *the apostle's description of death*; secondly, *his desire for it*, and thirdly, *the reasons which justified such a desire*.

I. THE APOSTLE'S DESCRIPTION OF DEATH. We are to understand this of course as being a description not of the death of the wicked, but of the death of the righteous. And you will remark the apostle does not call it an *arrest*. In the death of the wicked, the sheriff's officer of justice doth lay his clay-cold hand upon the man's shoulder, and he is his prisoner for ever. The sergent-at-arms in the name of the justice which has been incensed, puts the fetters about his wrists, and conducts him to the prison-house of despair and everlasting torment. In the Christian's case, however, there is no such thing as an arrest, for there is no one that can arrest him. We sometimes talk of death arresting the believer in the midst of his career, but we misuse terms. Who shall arrest a man against whom there is neither conviction nor accusation? Who is he that condemneth the man for whom Christ has died? Nay, further, who shall so much as lay anything to the charge of God's elect? How then can the Christian be arrested? It is no such thing; it is an arrest of the ungodly, but not of the believer.

Nor does Paul speak of the believer's death as being a sudden *plunge*. This is a proper description of the death of the ungodly. He stands upon the brink of a precipice, and beneath him there is a yawning and bottomless gulf. Through thick darkness he must descend, and into it his unwilling spirit must take a desperate leap. Not so the believer. His is no leap downwards: it is a climbing upwards. He has his foot upon the first round of the ladder, and joyful is the hour when his Master saith unto him, "Come up higher; ascend to another guest-chamber, and here feast upon richer dainties than those I have given thee below." Aye! 'tis no leap in the dark. 'Tis no plunge into a cold sea; 'tis simply a departure.

Let me describe what I think the apostle means by the figure of a *departure*. Many deaths are preceded by a long season of sickness, and then I think we might picture them by the departure of a ship from its moorings. There lies the ship in its haven. there is a friend of yours about to journey away to some distant clime. You will never see his face again in the flesh. He is going to emigrate; he will find a home in another and he hopes a happier land. You stand upon the shore; you have given him the last embrace. The mother has given to her son the last kiss, the friend has shaken him by the hand for the last time, and now the signal is given; the anchor is taken up; the rope which held the ship to the shore is loosed, and lo, the ship is moving and she floats outward towards the sea. You look, you still wave your hand as you see the ship departing. Your friend stands on some prominent spot on the deck, and there he waves his handkerchief to the last. But the most sharp-sighted of friends in such scenes must lose sight of one another. The ship floats on; you just now catch a sight of the sails, but with the strongest telescope you cannot discover your friend. He is gone: it is his departure. Weep as you may, you cannot bring him back again. Your sorrowful tears may mingle with the flood that has carried him away, but they cannot entice a single wave to restore him to you. Now even so is the death of many a believer. His ship is quietly moored in its haven. He is calmly lying upon his bed. You visit him in his chamber. Without perturbation of spirit he bids you farewell. His grip is just as hearty as he shakes your hand, as ever it was in the best hour of his health. His voice is still firm, and his eye is still bright. He tells you he is going to another and a better land. You say to him, "Shall I sing to you"—

"Begone unbelief, my Saviour is near?"

"Oh! no" says he, "sing me no such a hymn as that; sing me—

"Jerusalem my happy home,

Name ever dear to me,

When shall my labors have an end

In joy, and peace, and thee.”

He bide you a last farewell. You see him for a little season even after that, although he is too far gone again to address you. It may be a partial insensibility seizes hold of him; he is like a ship that is just going out of sight; you look at his lips, and as you bow down your ear, you can catch some faint syllables of praise. He is talking to himself of that precious Jesus who is still his joy and hope. You watch him till the last heaving breath has left the body, and you retire with the sweet reflection that his Spirit on a glassy sea has floated joyously to its post. Thus the believer's death is a departure. There is no sinking in the wave; there is no destruction of the vessel: it is a departure. He has gone; he has sailed over a calm and quiet sea, and he is gone to a better land.

At other times deaths are more sudden, and are not heralded by protracted sickness. The man is in health, and he is suddenly snatched away, and the place which knew him once knows him no more for ever. I am about to use a figure which will seem to you extremely homely, and certainly could not be classical. I remember to have been once a spectator in a sorrowful scene. A company of villagers, the younger branches of a family, were about to emigrate to another land. The aged mother who had not for some years left her cottage and her fireside, came to the railway station from which they must start on their departure. I stood among the sorrowful group as a friend and minister I think I see the many embraces which the fond mother gave to her son and daughter, and the little ones, her grand-children. I see them even now folding their arms about her aged neck, and then bidding farewell to all the friends in the village who had come to bid them adieu. And well I remember her, who was about to lose the props of her household. A shrill sound is heard, as if it were the messenger of death, it sends a pang through all hearts. In great haste at the small village station the passengers are hurried to their seats They thrust their heads out of the carriage window. The aged parent stands on the very edge of the platform that she may take the last look. There is a sound from the engine, and away goes the train. I remember well the instant when that poor woman leaning on her staff sprang up from the chair with which she had been accommodated, and jumping from the platform, rushed alone the railway with all her might, crying, “My children! My children! My children! They are gone and I shall never see them again.” The figure may not be classical, but nevertheless I have been reminded of it by many a death. When I have seen the godly suddenly snatched away—no time to watch them—they are gone, swift as the wind itself could bear them, as if the hasty waves of the sea had buried them out of sight. It is our affliction and our trouble, but we must stand behind and weep, for they are gone beyond recall. Notwithstanding, there is something pleasant in the picture. It is but a departure; they are not destroyed; they are not blown to atoms, they are not taken away to prison. ‘Tis but a departure from one place to another. They still live; they still are blessed. While we weep they are rejoicing. While we mourn they are singing psalms of praise. Remember this my brethren in the apparel of mourning, and, if you have lost friends of late, this may tend to console your spirits. Death to a believer is but a departure, yet what a departure it is! Can you and I think calmly of it? The time must come when I must depart from wife and children, and from house and home, when I must depart from everything that is dear to me on earth. The time is coming to thee, oh rich Christian, when thou must depart from all the comforts of thine estate, from all the luxuries of thine household, from all the enjoyments which thy rank confers upon thee. And oh, poor Christian, lover of thy home, the time is coming when thou must depart from thy cot, homely though it be, still dear unto thee; thou must leave the place of thy toil, and the sanctuary of thy rest. We must mount as on eagle's wings far from this world. We must bid adieu to its green fields as well as its dreary streets. We must say farewell to

its blue skies and to its dusky clouds; farewell to foe and friend: farewell to all we have, alike to trial and to joy. But blessed be God it is not the last look of a criminal condemned to die, it is the farewell of one who departs to another and a happier land.

The apostle's description of death, however, is not finished. He has here only pictured that which is visible. We now come to notice his description of the invisible part of death—

“In vain the fancy strives to paint
The moment after death;
The glories which surround the saint
When yielding up his breath.
This much—and this is all we know,
They are supremely blest;
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
And with their Saviour rest.”

This is precisely the apostle's description of the state of the believer after death. They depart; yes, but whither? To be with Christ. Just observe how quickly these scenes follow each other. The sail is spread; the soul is launched upon the deep. How long will be its voyage? How many wearying winds must beat upon the sail ere it shall be reefed in the port of peace? How often shall that soul be tossed upon the waves before it comes to the sea that knows no storm. Oh tell it, tell it everywhere; yon ship that has just departed is already at its haven. It did but spread its sail and it was there. Like the old ship on the lake of Galilee, there was a storm that tossed it, but Jesus said, “Peace, be still,” and immediately it came to land. Yes, think not that there is a long period between the instant of death and the eternity of glory. There is not so much as space for the intervening of a lightning's flash. One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks, we scarce can say it is gone before the ransomed spirit takes its mansion near the throne. We depart, we are with Christ; more quickly than I can say the words, swifter than speech can express them they become true. They depart, nod they are with Christ; the selfsame instant they have closed their eyes on earth they have opened them in heaven. And what is this invisible part of death? “*To be with Christ.*” Who can comprehend this but the Christian? It is a heaven which the worldling cares not for, if he could have it, he would not pawn his meanest lust to gain it. To be with Christ is to him a thing of nought, as gold and silver are of no more value to little children than the pieces of platter with which they will amuse themselves. So heaven and being with Christ is of no value to the childish sons of earthly mirth. They know not what a mass of glory is crowded into that one sentence. “*To be with Christ.*” To the believer who understands it, it means, first, *vision*. “Thine eyes shall see him.” I have heard of *him*, and though I have not seen his face, unceasingly I have adored him. But I shall *see* him. Yes, we shall actually gaze upon the exalted Redeemer. Realize the thought. Is there not a young heaven within it? Thou shalt see the hand that was nailed for thee; thou shalt kiss the very lips that said, “I thirst;” thou shalt see the thorn-crowned head, and bow with all the blood-washed throng, thou, the chief of sinners, shalt adore him who washed thee in his blood; when thou shalt have a vision of his glory. Faith is precious but what must sight be? To view Jesus as the Lamb of God through the glass of faith makes the soul rejoice with joy unspeakable; but oh! to see him face to face, to look into those dear eyes; to be embraced by those divine arms rapture begins at the very mention of it! While I speak of him, my soul is like the chariots of Aminadab, and I desire to depart and to be with him. But what must the vision be when the veil is taken from his face, and the dimness from our eyes, and when we shall talk with him even as a man talketh with his friend. But it is not only

vision, it is *communion*. We shall walk with him, he shall walk with us, he shall speak to us, and we shall speak to him. All that the spouse desired in Solomon's Song, we shall have, and ten thousand times more. Then will the prayer be fulfilled "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips, for his love is better than wine." Then we shall be able to say "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." Then will he tell us his love; then will rehearse the ancient story of the ever-lasting covenant, of his election of us by his own true love, of his betrothal of us through his boundless affection, of his purchase of us by his rich compassion, of his preservation of us by his omnipotence, and of his bringing us safe at last to glory as the result of his promise and his blood. And then will we tell to him our love, then into his ear will we pour out the song of gratitude, a song such as we have never sung on earth, unmixed and pure, full of serenity and joy, no groans to mar its melody; a song rapt and seraphic, like the flaming sonnets which flash from burning tongues above. Happy, happy, happy day, when vision and communion shall be ours in fullness!" To be with Christ which is far better."

Nor is this all, it means *fruition* of Christ. Here we look and long to taste or if we taste it is but a sip, and we long to drink to the full. *Here* we are like Israel in the wilderness, who had but one cluster from Eschol, *there* we shall be in the vineyard. Here do we have the manna falling small, like coriander seed, but there shall we eat the bread of heaven and the old corn of the kingdom. We have sometimes on earth, lusts, ungratified desires, that lack satisfaction, but there the lust shall be slain and the desire shall be satiated. There shall be nothing we can want; every power shall find the sweetest employment in that eternal world of joy. There will be a full and lasting fruition of Christ, and last of all upon this point there shall be a sharing with Christ in his glory, and that for ever. "We shall see him," yes, and let us have the next sentence, and "shall be like him when we shall see him as he is." Oh Christian, antedate heaven for a few years. Within a very little time thou shalt be rid of all thy trials and thy troubles; thine aching head shall be girt with a crown of glory, thy poor panting heart shall find its rest and shall be satisfied with fullness as it beats upon the breast of Christ. Thy hands that now toil shall know no harder labor than harp-strings can afford. Thine eyes now suffused with tears shall weep no longer. Thou shalt gaze in ineffable rapture upon the splendor of him who sits upon the throne. Nay more, upon his throne shalt thou sit. He is King of kings, but thou shalt reign with him. He is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, but thou shalt be a priest with him. Oh rejoice! The triumph of his glory thou be shared by thee; his crown, his joy, his paradise, these shall be thine, and thou shalt be co-heir with him who is the heir of all things. Doth not this very description of the unseen part of death stir up in the heart of the believer a longing "to depart and to be with Christ which is far better."

II. I have thus, as well as I was able, spoken upon the first part. And now my friends, let us consider THE APOSTLE'S DESIRE. How differently do men regard death. We have seen men shriek at the prospect of it. I have seen the man driven to madness when the skeleton king has stared him in the face. Pacing up and down his chamber he has declared with many a curse and imprecation that he would not and could not die—shrieking so that you could scarcely bear his company. He has looked forward to death as the concentration of all despair and agony, and he has vainly striven, with all his might, not to die. When he felt at last that death was stronger than he, and that he must get a desperate fall in the struggle, then has he began to shriek and to cry in such a strain that scarce demons themselves could excel the despair concentrated in each shriek. Others have we seen who have met death somewhat more calmly. Biting their lips, and setting fast their teeth, they have endeavored to keep up appearances, even in the last moment, but they have endured the inward

suffering, betrayed to us most plainly by the staring eye, and the awful look. Others, too, we have seen, who, callous through sin, totally deserted by God's Spirit and given up to a seared conscience have gone to their death with idiot resignation. They have even played the madman yet more fully, and have tried to brag and bully even in the jaws of hell. Many Christians, have we met—true believers—who can go so far as to say they were willing to die. Please God, whenever the solemn hour should come, they were prepared to go up to their chamber and stretch themselves upon their bed, and say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." But the apostle had gone further than they. He said he had a desire to depart, and the desire was a strong one. The Greek word has much force in it. He panteth, he longeth to be gone. I might paraphrase it by one of the verses of an old hymn—

"To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone."

He desired not to get away from earth for he loved to serve his Master, but he desired to be with Christ, which he declared to be far better. I ask you if you were in Paul's condition would not such a desire contain the very fullness of wisdom. There is a ship at sea, Fully laden. It has a precious cargo of gold on board. Happy is the kingdom that shall receive the wealth which is contained within its hold. Would you not if you were a possessor of such a vessel long to be safe in port. The empty ship needs scarcely fear the water for what hath she to lose. If it casts its ballast into the sea, what is it the poorer? But when the ship is full of treasure well may the captain long to see it safely moored. Now Paul was full of faith and love. He could say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And what wonder therefore that he was longing to be safely anchored at home. So the soldier, who in the midst of battle has smitten down foe after foe, knows that a high reward awaits him. He has charged upon the enemy, and driven them back in many a desperate struggle. He has already been victor. Do you wonder he wishes the fight now were over, that his laurels may be safe? If he had played the coward he might long that the campaign should be protracted, that he might redeem his disgrace. But having so far fought with honor he may well desire that the garment rolled in blood, may be rolled up for ever. Ay! and so was it with the apostle. He had fought a good fight, and knew that the crown was laid up for him in heaven, and he anticipated the triumph which Christ would give him, and what marvel that panting and longing, he said, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better?" Upon this point I am constrained to be brief, because the next division involves the whole matter, and upon this, I would be somewhat longer. And may God grant that what I shall say upon it may be impressive.

III. PAUL'S REASONS FOR LONGING TO DEPART. There have been—it is the part of candour to admit it—there have been other men besides Christians who have longed to die. There is the suicide who, mad, from life's history hangs to be hurled, even though hell receive him. Tired of all life's troubles he thinks he sees a way to escape from his toil and from his sorrow through the grim gate of death. He stains his hand with his own blood, and red with his own gore appears before his Maker. Ah fool, to leap from *one* evil to a myriad! Ah madman, to plunge from little streams of woe into an unfathomable gulf of agony! There can be no more absurd, revolting, and insensible act, than for a man to take away his life. Setting aside the horrors of crime that surround it, how foolish is the attempt to escape by rushing into the very midst of danger! The ostrich who buries her head in the sand, and when she cannot see the hunter thinks the hunter cannot see her, is sensible and wise compared with such a man, who rushing into the very thick of the battle hopes in this way to escape from his enemy. How can it be thou foolish man? Is the stream too deep for

thee already, and instead of seeking to find a shore by faith in God dost thou seek the center of the stream that thou mayest get a firmer footing there? Oh foolish generation and unwise, "Put up thy sword into thy scabbard and do thyself no harm," for harm thou wilt do if thou rush into a greater evil to escape the less.

There have been other men, who with a so called philosophic spirit, have desired to die. Some men are sick altogether of mankind. They have met with so many ungrateful and deceitful wretches that they say, "Let me get rid of them all.

'Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Where rumor of oppression never more
May reach mine ear.'"

And they have thought to find this lodge in the wilderness of death; and so they long for the wings of a dove to flee away from the degenerate race of men. Not so this apostle. He was no such coward as to fly from evils; he sought to better them. The apostle loved his race; he was no man-hater. He could say that he loved them all, and thus he had prayed for them all, and had carried them in the bowels of Christ continually to the throne of mercy. Others, too, have thought by getting out of the world they should get rid of their disappointments. They have struggled very hard to get rich, or they have striven for fame, and they have not succeeded, in their ambitious designs, and then they have said, "Let me die." Now the apostle was never disappointed in seeking wealth for he never cared for it. He had no desires whatever beyond food and raiment. He wished for nothing more, and as for rank that he utterly despised. He did tread beneath his feet as the mire of the streets all the honors that man could give him. Nor was the apostle in any sense a disappointed man. He had sought to spread his Master's fame and he had done it. He had a standard to plant and right well had he planted it. He had a gospel to preach and he did preach it everywhere with all his might. He was a singularly happy man, and therefore he had no such cowardly reasons for desiring to depart.

Others, too, have said that they wished to depart because of their great suffering. Now the apostle thought of no such dastard flight. He was ready for all weathers. He had been beaten with rods; he had been stoned; he had been shipwrecked; but he could say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me." He did not wish to escape from persecution. He rejoiced therein. He had often sung a hymn in prison, besides that hymn which he had sung with Silas for his companion. He had often shouted in the prospect of the block or the flames. Nor did he wish to die because of old age, for he was not an aged man when he wrote this epistle. He was just then, I suppose, in full vigorous health, and though in prison I do think that an angel might have ransacked the whole world before he could have found a happier man than the apostle Paul, for a man's happiness consisteth not in the wealth which he possesses. In the bare dungeons of Rome, Paul, the tent maker, had a glory about him which Nero never had in all his palaces; and there was a happiness there to which Solomon in all his glory never had attained. So then, the desire of Paul to depart is for these reasons far superior to the desire of the mere philosopher, or of the disappointed worldling.

What then made Paul wish to depart? I shall put it thus—the same reasons prompt the desires of every true believer; but they can have no power whatever with many here, who have no desire to depart, because for you to die would be not happiness and bliss, but an eternal weight of misery.

First, the apostle felt a desire to depart because he knew that in departing and being with Christ he should be clean rid of sin. Paul hated sin; every true believer does the same. There have been

times with us brethren and sisters when we could say, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Sin has been our plague. Like righteous Lot in Sodom, the sins of others have vexed us; but, alas! we have had to bear a Sodom in our own hearts, which has vexed us still more. As to the trials and troubles of this world, they are nothing at all to the believer, compared with the annoyance of sin. Could he get rid of his unbelief, of his murmuring disposition, of his hasty temper—could he get rid of the various temptations of Satan, could he be clean, and pure, and perfect, he would be thoroughly satisfied. And this made the apostle long to depart. "Oh," saith he to himself, one baptism in the stream of death and I am perfect—but to pass the chill and dreary stream and I shall stand without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the throne of God." The dog of hell shall follow us to the very edge of Jordan, but he cannot swim that stream. The arrows of temptation will be shot at us as long as we are here, but on the other side of Jordan these darts can never wound us more. Rejoice, then, believer, in the prospect of death, because in dying thou art once for all clean rid of sin. When I lay down this body I have laid down every infirmity, and every lust, and every temptation, and when clothed upon with that house which is from heaven, I have girt about my loins perfection and unsullied purity. But oh! ye that believe not in Christ, ye do not desire to die for such a reason as this. For you there is no such a prospect. For you to die will be but to plunge deeper into sin. You sin now, and when you die your spirit will descend to hell, where, in the midst of fit companions, whose guilt is ripened, you shall spend an eternity in oaths, and curses, and blasphemies. O sinner! to-day you sow your sins in the furrows, and when you die you shall reap the harvest. To-day you break the clods, to-day you work in the husbandry of iniquity, then there shall be a shouting of an awful harvest home. When pressed down with the sheaves of your sins, divine justice shall bring forth the harvest of misery and torment to you. You have reason enough to long to live, because for you to die is to reap the reward of your iniquities.

Again, Paul longed to die for another reason, because he knew that as soon as he should depart he could meet his brethren in faith who had gone before. This desire also prompts you and me. I long to see, though it is but a few hours since we have lost their society, those two sisters, and the dear brother who during this week have departed in Christ. Worshipping among us but a few days ago, it seems a strange thing to talk of them as being in heaven. But there they are, far from the reach of mortal vision. At our departure we shall see them. It was our happiness to see them not long before their departure, and to mark it down as one of the notabilia of our life, that these three, all of them alike died in quiet peace singing themselves into heaven, never staying their song, so long as memory and breath held out. We shall see them. But we have others we are longing for. Some of you may remember the departed wife, scarce cold within her grave. Many of you look back to dear little ones taken away in their infancy, carried off to their father's God. Many of you remember aged parents; those that taught you in the way of God; the mother from whose lips you learned the first verse of Scripture, and the father upon whose arms you were carried for the first time up to the house of God. They are gone; but the joyous reflection remains that we are going in the same direction, and that we shall meet them soon. Some of us can look back through generations and trace our pedigree through the saints, and we are longing for the time when the whole band of us, those who have gone in olden time, and those who remain may sing together that new song of praise to our common God. Beloved, we have high joys in prospect: we shall soon join the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Our companions now are but poor and despised, but we shall soon be brethren with princes. Moses who was king in

Jeshurun, and David who ruled over Israel, shall not be ashamed to call us brethren, for the Highest himself shall acknowledge us, and he that on the throne doth sit shall lead us unto living fountains of waters, and in his gracious fellowship shall wipe away all tears from off our faces. I think that the company of apostles, and prophets, and holy martyrs and confessors, who have gone before, will be a very sweet part of the bliss of the redeemed. And all this may make us pant to depart. But, O ye ungodly ones! ye who have never been converted, and who fear not God, this hope is not for you. You must go to your own place. And whither must you go? To your drunken companions damned before you? Must you go down to the pit with harlots and with the profane? Whither away, whither away, thou careless man, thou lover of sin? Whither art thou going when thou diest? Thine answer might well be this doleful ditty: "I am going to be the guest of devils; I am going to feast with fiends; I am going to abide with murderers, and whoremongers, and adulterers, and with such as God hath condemned. These must be my companions for ever." Methinks I see the wheat of God standing in the valley every year, about to be gathered into the garner of heaven in its own place, and yonder I see the tares, and what is the message for them? "Gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them." And who knows in what bundle you may be? You may be bound up in the same bundle with murderers and suicides. Yes, the men that you despise may be your companions in the bundle of the wicked. The drunkard and the swearer, whom some of you pretendedly good people look down upon with scorn, may be your bundle companions, your bed-fellows for ever when you make your bed in hell and abide in everlasting torment.

But last of all, Paul's grand reason for desiring to depart was to be with Christ. Again I say, simple though the words be—to be with Christ, have all heaven condensed in them. Like the sounding of the silver trumpet of jubilee rings this precious sentence, "to be with Christ." Like the harps of the glorified—like the singing of the redeemed, like the hallelujahs of paradise, does this ring upon mine ears, "To be with Christ." Lift up your voices, ye seraphim! Tune your hearts anew, ye seraphs! Shout for joy ye blood-washed, but your loudest strains cannot excel the thundering glory of this magnificent but brief sentence, "to be with Christ, which is far better." This, my beloved—this shall well repay the tiresome pilgrimage of life. This reward shall be sufficient for all our contests with temptation, for all the shame we have endured in following Christ, in the midst of a wicked generation. This, this shall be all the heaven that our largest desires shall crave. This immensity of bliss shall stretch across eternity.

But O unbeliever, what hast thou to do with such a hope as this? Thou canst not desire to depart and to be with Christ, for what is Christ to thee? To-day thou despisest him. The man of sorrow thou esteemed not. Jesus of Nazareth thou dost not regard. He is preached to thee every Sabbath day, but thou despisest him. With many tears have I presented him to thee, but thou hast shut thine heart against him; he has knocked at thy door and there he stands shivering even now, but thou wilt not admit him. Beware ye that despise Jesus, for in another world ye shall see him after another fashion. Ye too shall be with him, but it shall be but for an instant. Summoned before his bar, dragged reluctantly to his dread tribunal, ye shall see him whom you despise; ye shall see him and not another. But oh, with what astonishment will ye behold him, and what amazement shall seize upon you! Ye shall see him, but no longer as the humble man! his eyes shall be as flames of fire. Out of his mouth shall go a two-edged sword. About him shall be wrapped "the rainbow wreath, and robes of storm," and he shall speak in louder tones than the noise of many waters, and in great thunderings shall he address thee, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way when his

wrath is kindled but a little.” Oh, go to your houses; may God the Spirit draw you to your chambers, and may you there be led to fall upon your knees, confess your guilt, and humbly seek for pardon, through that precious blood which flows freely this day, and which will freely give pardon to you if with all your heart you seek it. May God’s Spirit lead you so to seek that you may find, and may you and I, and all of us, in the day of our departure, see the land before us—the happy shore of heaven. May we know that as our vessel sails from earth it shall only take a hasty voyage “to be with Christ which is far better.” God the Spirit visit you now, God the Son bless you, God the Father remember you, through Jesus. Amen.

The absence of the regular reporter is the publishers’ apology for the incorrectness of this sermon. Mr. SPURGEON has found it utterly impossible to recall the words which he uttered, and which many of his hearers declare to have been attended with peculiar power.

Who Can Tell?

A Sermon

(No. 275)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 18th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”—Jonah 3:9.

THIS WAS THE FORLORN HOPE of the Ninevites: “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” The book of Jonah should be exceedingly comfortable to those who are despairing because of the wickedness of their times. Nineveh was a city as great in its wickedness as in its power. If any of us with little faith had been bidden to go round about her, and “tell the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks;” if we had been commanded to go through her streets and behold her both in the blaze of the sun and in the light of the moon as her inhabitants indulged in vice, we should have said. “Alas! Alas! the city is wholly given into idolatry, and it is girt about with a wall of sin, as stupendous as its wall of stone.” Suppose that the problem had been given to us to solve—how shall this city be moved to repentance? How shall its vice be forsaken and the God of Israel worshipped by all its inhabitants from the highest to the lowest? If we had not been paralyzed with despair, which is the most probable, we should, nevertheless, have sat down carefully to consider our plans. We should have parcelled it out into missionary districts; we should have needed at least several hundreds, it not thousands, of able ministers; at once, expenses would have to be incurred, and we should have considered ourselves bound to contemplate the erection of innumerable structures in which the Word of God might be preached. Our machinery would necessarily become cumbrous; we should find that we, unless we had the full resources of an empire, could not even begin the work. But what saith the Lord concerning this? Putting aside the judgments of reason, and all the plans and schemes which flesh and blood so naturally do follow, he raises up one man. By a singular providence he qualifies that one man for his mission. He sends him down into the very depths of the sea, where the weeds are wrapped about him, he comes up from the great deep, and the awful descent has steeled his soul and completely covered him with the armor of courageous faith. Who need tremble at anything on shore who has passed the bowels of a fish and yet survived? He comes into the city, his eyes almost starting from their sockets with the recollection of the great judgment which had passed over his head, and in stern inflexible manner, with shrill monotonous voice, he begins to cry, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” Is this, O God! is this thy way? Is this the means with which thou wilt accomplish the great event? Wilt thou make Nineveh repent at the bidding of one man? Shall yon sallow man fresh from the sea—shall his voice be sufficient to stir this great city? O God! if thou hadst come forth in thy fiery chariot, if thou hadst spoken with thy thunder, if thou hadst shaken the earth with thine earthquakes then might Nineveh feel, but surely this one man is not sufficient for the deed. But as high as the heaven is above the earth, so high are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. So skillful is he that with the weakest instrument he can produce the mightiest workmanship. That one man begins his journey. Already the inhabitants

flock to listen to him. He proceeds—the crowd multiplies. As he stands at the corner of the alleys, and the lanes, every window is thrown up to listen, and the streets are thronged as he walks along. Still on he goes till the whole city has begun to shake with his terrible voice. And now the King himself bide him come into his presence, and the fearless still propounds the threatening of God. Then comes the effect. All Nineveh is wrapped in sackcloth; the cry of man and beast go up in one terrible wailing to God. Jehovah is honored and Nineveh repents. Ah! My brethren, we see in this rich grounds for hope. What cannot God do? Think not that he needs to wait for us. He can accomplish the greatest deeds by the meanest instrumentality. One man, if he willed it, would be sufficient to stir this giant city. One man, if God decreed it, might be the means of the conversion of a nation, nay, a continent should shake beneath the tramping of one man. There is no palace so high that this one man's voice should not reach it, and there is no den of infamy so deep that his cry should not be heard therein. All we need is that God should "make bare his arm," and who can withstand his might. What though he grasp but the jaw-bone of an ass yet is his arm mightier than Samson's, and not only would it be heaped upon heaps, but city upon city, continent upon continent. With the meanest instrument would God slay his thousands and overcome his myriads. Oh church of God, never fear; remember the men that God has given thee in the days of yore. Look back to Paul; remember Augustine; think ye well of Luther, and of Calvin; talk ye of Whitfield, and of Wesley, and remember these were but separate individual men, and yet through them God did a work, the remembrance whereof still rolleth on and shall never cease while this earth endures.

With this by way of preface, I shall now somewhat turn aside from the narrative, to address myself to those who are trembling on account of sin and who are in the same position as the men of Nineveh, and like them anxiously desiring mercy.

I shall notice briefly this morning three things. First, *the miserable plight in which the men of Nineveh found themselves*; secondly, *the scanty reasons which they had for hope*; and then, thirdly, I shall observe that we have *stronger reasons to compel us to pray, and more comfortable arguments to urge us to trust*.

I. First then, I shall consider the men of Nineveh, as representing many here present, as to THE DOLEFUL PLIGHT IN VICE THEY FOUND THEMSELVES. The men of Nineveh were like those in the days of Noah. They were married and given in marriage: they ate and they drank: they builded and they planted. The whole world was their granary, and the kingdoms of the earth their hunting ground. They were rich and mighty above all people, for God had greatly increased their prosperity; and they had become the greatest nation upon the face of the earth. Locked in security they fell into great and abominable sins. Their vices probably rivalled those of Sodom. If they were not worse even than the Eastern cities of the present day, they were abominable beyond description. How suddenly were they however startled from their security and convinced of their sin? The preaching of that one strange man had brought them from the height of their splendor to the depths of sorrow. Now was their boasting cut off; the sound of their mirth had ceased; and they began to weep and lament. What was their miserable plight? I take it, it consisted in three discoveries; they now discovered *their great sin*; then again, *the shortness of their time*, and in the next place, *the terrible character of their destruction*. Would that ye would discover the like ye careless sinners, ye that slumber in Zion, ye that fear not God, neither turn from your evil ways. Would I say that in the first place, some prophet-voice would stir you to remember *your sins*, for are they not many and exceeding great? Let each man among us look to his life, and who is there here that need not blush? Some of us have been moral. We have by the training of our youth and by the restraints of

grace been kept from the immoralities of others, but even we are compelled to lay our mouths in the dust. While looking into our heart, we discover it to be a nest of unclean birds, full of all manner of evil and loathsome things. We have been as visions in our hearts as the worst of men have been in their acts. But there are too many who cannot even plead that they have been moral, though this would be but a poor excuse for the want of love to God. Look, men and brethren, look to your lives; who among us hath been free from murmuring against God? Who is he that hath loved his neighbor as himself? Who is it that has never been angry without a cause? Who has never cursed God in his heart, even if he hath not done so with his lips? Who among us have always scrupulously kept our eye from lust and our heart from covetousness? Have we not all sinned? If our iniquities could now be revealed; if on every man's brow were written his sin, which of you would not put his hand upon his forehead to hide his iniquity from his fellows? It will be of essential service to many of you if you will read over your lives. Turn, I beseech you, to the pages of your memory, and let the black, blotted, misspelled pages now be read again. Think not that the preacher understands how to flatter his congregation. It has become fashionable in these times to look upon our hearers as all being good and excellent—would not this be a lie and a falsehood before Almighty God? Are there not here those that can indulge secretly in vices which we must not mention? Are there not those who do that to their fellows in trade which they would despise in others? What! are none of you covetous? Do none of you over-reach or defraud your neighbors? Do none of ye practice the common frauds and tricks in trade? Are none of ye liars, and none deceivers, none slanderers who bear false witness against your neighbors? Am I so happy as to have a spotless congregation here? I cannot flatter myself that such can be the truth. No, our iniquities are great and our sins are hideous. Oh, that we were all ready to confess, each man for himself, the iniquities which we have done! Surely, if the Spirit of God shall but shine into our hearts and show us the evil of our ways, we shall find ourselves in a sorrowful condition indeed, and shall be ready to cry out before God, oven as Nineveh did of old.

Added to this however the Ninevites had information as to *the shortness of their days*. “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” How fixed and definite the date! Six weeks shall scarcely run their round,” says the Prophet, “ere ye must die, and perish miserably.” To an hour was the time described, “yet forty days.” How would the Ninevites count the days with terror, and watch each rising and setting sun as if these were the black milestones upon their dreary road to death! “Ah,” saith one, “but ye will not tell us that our days are only forty.” Nay, men and brethren I am no prophet. I cannot tell how many your days may be, but this one thing I can say, it is possible that there are some here who have not forty days to live! There may be some among you who have not so long a respite as even Nineveh itself. Suppose now I should be able to take you to that great city. If I could have shown you its massive ramparts and its stupendous fortresses; if like Jonah I could point to them and say, “In forty days this city will be an overthrown,” which would require the greatest stretch of credulity to believe this prophecy or that which follows, “In forty days your body shall crumble back to dust?” Which I say would require the greatest stretch of faith? whether is the easier of these twain, to send *you* to death, or to uproot a city? What art thou, man, but a heap of animated dust? A worm may destroy thee, a grain of sand may be sufficient to take away thy life. Feeble is the thread of life, a spider's web is a cable compared therewith. It is but a dream, a child's whisper may break it, and we may awake in another world. “Forty days!” surely that was a long and distant period compared with what may be the date of your death. I have been long enough preaching in this place to look back now on many who have gone from this spot to the

place appointed to all firing. Many, many are the faces which this day I miss as I look along your ranks and cast my eye around this gallery. There are not a few who I remember to have passed from the land of the living and to have gone to another world—and some how suddenly, how rapidly! I have been startled at it often myself. I have seen some here on the Sabbath, and by the Tuesday or by the Thursday the message has come, “On what day can you bury such-and-such a one?” “Bury her!” “Yes sir, bury her, she is gone;” and I have said, “How strange it seems that she should be dead who so lately was living in our midst!”

Forty days I add is a long lease compared with that which you have any reason to conclude that God has bestowed on you. But what if it were forty years, how short a time even then. If ye will but look with the eye of wisdom, how rapidly our years revolve. Are you not startled even now to see the sear leaf in your path? It was but yesterday that the fresh green buds were seen. It seemeth but a month ago since first we saw the wheat starting up from the ground, and lo the harvest is over and gone and many of the birds have disappeared and the tints of autumn are succeeding the verdure of summer. Years seem but months now and months but days, and days pass so rapidly that they ‘flit like shadows before us. O! men and women, if we could but measure life it is but a span, and in a time how short, how brief every one of us must appear before his God. The shortness of time should help to arouse us, and then, let me add the third thing which startled the Ninevites was this, *the terrible character of the judgment*. Doubtless one part of the effect of Jonah’s preaching may be traced to the singular vagueness of his prophecy. He says, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” By whom, he does not tell us. How he does not deign to reveal. It is to be overthrown, that is all. Whether some mighty nation should invade it, or whether an earthquake should swallow it up quick, or whether by plague or pestilence the whole city should be emptied, or whether an intestine quarrel should cut off the population, he says not. The very vagueness and indistinctness of a prophecy adds to its terror, just as men can never bring their minds to think of spectres in the plain daylight, but always conjure up such things in hours of shade and gloom. The gloominess of the message made men tremble. And oh! ye that are not reconciled to God, men without religion, without hope and without God in the world, how terrible is the judgment that shall come upon you! It is not for me to attempt to describe it. Scripture only speaks of the life to come in indistinct terms. Terrible are they in their vagueness. Jesus saith, “These shall go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” and anon he speaks of torment as a place “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” and then he describes it as “a bottomless pit,” and as “a fire” that “never shall be quenched.” Ah! my brethren, we know but little of the wrath of God which shall certainly come upon the wicked, but we know enough to let us understand that it is too terrible for human ear to hear. If hell had been fully described to us in this time-state, this life itself would have been but the vestibule of eternal torment. I question whether any eyes could bear to read such a description as God might have given. Both our ears would have tingled, and our hearts would melt like water, at the sound thereof. Oh! sinner, it is enough for me to say to you this day, “Except ye repent, ye must perish with a terrible overthrow. God, even God himself, shall draw his sword and bathe it in your blood. He shall drive you from his presence amidst the thunders of his wrath and the lightnings of his vengeance. He shall smite you with his omnipotence, and shall spend himself in punishing you, and your torment shall be without end, and the smoke thereof shall go up for ever and ever. I speak not this day to you that are unbelievers in the word: with you I will have nothing to do this morning; but to you who are believers in the revelation of the Bible—who profess to be nominal Christians, with you I have to deal. Oh sirs, if ye believe

this book, if ye are impenitent, how tremendous is the doom which awaits you; how fatal shall death be to you, and how terrible the last dread day of judgment! And all this is coming on apace. The chariot wheels of God's justice have axles which are hot with speed, the black coursers are covered with foam as on they drive. Perhaps, as here I stand and speak alas, too coldly on things which should make any man boil over with enthusiasm—perhaps death may even now be fitting his arrow to the string, and you may be his victim, and this sermon may be closed, as Paul's sermon was, with some one's falling dead like Eutychus, in the window in his sleep. God grant it may not be so, but nevertheless there is cause enough for each one of us to tremble and to bow before the God of Israel. Thus have I spoken on the first point: O Holy Spirit, bless the word!

These Ninevites however took heart and hope. They said, "Let us proclaim a fast, let man and beast cry mightily unto God, for who can tell but he may turn from his fierce anger that we perish not."

II. Now the second point was, THE SLENDER GROUND WHICH THE NINEVITES HAD FOR HOPE. And now regard attentively, for I long this morning for you all in the bowels of Christ, that ye also with a far better hope may be enabled to imitate the example of the men of Nineveh. You will notice that in Jonah's message, there was no proclamation of mercy made. It was one short sentence of doom. 'Twas like the great bell of St. Sepulchre's Church tolling out the hour of the execution of a criminal. There was not so much as a note of mercy. 'Twas the trumpet of the Judge, but not the silver trump of Jubilee. No mercy glanced from Jonah's eye, no pity was in his heart. He was sent with a thundering commission and he dealt it out in a thundering fashion. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be Overthrown." I think I see the king of Nineveh sitting down with his nobles at a council of state, and one of them would say, "We have little hope of mercy, for if you will observe Jonah never offered us any. How terribly he spoke. There was not so much as a tear in his eye. I am persuaded that Jonah's God is very just and severe. He will by no means spare us; we shall be cut off." But the king's answer to his councillor was, "Who can tell? you only think so, but you cannot say it, let us yet hope, for *Who can tell.*" My dear hearers, 'tis no Jonah that addresses you. My language to-day shall be rather that of Isaiah, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Oh cannot you say with Nineveh's king, "*Who can tell?*" Will not you go home to your chamber and pray, for "*Who can tell?*" Will you not go to the Bible and search for a promise, for "*Who can tell?*" Will you not go to the cross and trust in the flowing blood, for "*Who can tell?*" You may be forgiven yet, accepted yet, and one day yet sing God's praises before the throne above. Another thing which would cut off the hope of the Ninevites very much was this, that they knew nothing of God except, it may be, some dreadful legends they had heard of his terrible acts. One of the councillors of the king deeply learned would say, "O king, live for ever! The God of Jonah is a terrible God. Hast thou not heard what he did in Egypt; how he destroyed Pharaoh and his chariots of old in the Red Sea? And hast thou not heard what he did to Sennacherib when he cut him off and his hosts? Hast thou never heard the thunder of his power, and the might of his terrible acts? Surely he will have no mercy on us." But the king answered—"Who can tell?" Thou dost not know. It is but a surmise. "Who can tell?" But oh, my hearers, we are on a vantage ground here, for you know that God is merciful. Many and many a time have we assured you from the lips of God himself, through this written word, that he delighteth in mercy. You have his promise for it, nay, you have his oath for it. Jehovah lifts his hand to heaven, and swears by himself. "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.” Come, then sinner, for “who can tell;” he is a merciful God. Do what Benhadad did of old, when he and his army had been routed, and he alone was left with a few of his nobles. He said: “Let us put ropes on our necks, and go unto the king of Israel, for we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings.” Do you the like with Jesus. You have heard that he is merciful and full of compassion. Come to him now; trust in his blood, and “who can tell;” this day your sins may be blotted out? “*Who can tell?*” This day you may be washed in the blood of Christ, and made white as Adam in Paradise. “*Who can tell?*” This day the Lord may make your heart leap with joy, while he whispers—“Thou art mine, and I am thine.” “Who can tell?” Drowning men catch at straws—this is no straw—this is a solid rock: lay hold on it and be saved. “*Who can tell?*”

But once again, the people of Nineveh lacked another encouragement which you and I have. They had never heard of the cross. Jonah’s preaching was very powerful, but there was no Christ in it. There was nothing about the Messiah that was to come—no talking of the sprinkled blood—no mention of a great sin-atonement sacrifice—and therefore the men who were in the council of the king, might have said—“Surely we have never heard that any satisfaction has been offered to the injured justice of God. How therefore can he be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly? “Ah,” said the king, “who can tell?” and on that slender “who can tell?” they ventured to cry for mercy; but oh, sinner thou art answered this day, that “God hath spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that he sent forth his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but might be saved. For there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Come sinner, come to the cross, for God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. I say, this should make thee ask—“Who can tell?” He may wash me clean, he may accept me, and I may yet be able to sing with the loudest of all the voices of his children—

“I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.”

And now shall I tell you what I think was the hope which the poor king of Nineveh really had? I have set before you his discouragements, and now I will set before you his encouragements. They were very slender, but still they seemed to have been sufficient. Perhaps the king said in his heart, or he might have said to his councillors—“Sirs, there is one thing which ye cannot deny, we are come to the worst, and if we repent and cry for mercy, at least that cry will not be to our disadvantage. We shall be none the worse off even if we are not heard.”

Now sometimes I have known a trembling sinner take comfort even from that. The words of our hymn suggest the full idea.

“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away I know,
I must for ever die.”

If you seek not Christ; if you repent not of sin; if you put not your trust in him, perish you must. That is certain. If you go, and are rejected, at least you are none the worse off. Try it, and you shall find out that you are much the better, for you shall not be rejected. Remember the cage of the three lepers at the gate of Samaria. They were sitting there without food to eat, and at last the pangs of hunger were strong upon them. One of them said to his fellows, “Let us go now to the host of the Syrians. If they kill us we shall but die; if they save us alive, we shall live, but if we stay here,

perish we must. So, as there was nothing to lose, and there might be something to gain, they risked it. Oh, sinner, would to God the Lord would teach thee as much wisdom as this. Go to him just as thou art, and say, "Lord, sink or swim, I take thy cross to be my only trust. If thou wilt not save me, if I perish in the stream, yet will I perish clinging to the rock of my salvation, for no other trust and no other hope have I." Oh that you may be led to do even this, and ye shall not be disappointed.

Besides, the king would add, "It is true that Jonah did not *say* that God would have mercy, but then he did not say he would *not*." There was a cry from Jonah's lip, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" but he did not say, "God will not have any mercy at all." So the king said, "Who can tell, then?" if any could have told him, Jonah would. Was he not a fierce looking man; if there had been any thunders in store, would he not have dealt them out in his terrible fury of prophecy? "Surely," said the king, if he stopped there, and did not add, "I will have no mercy, this is a happy token. Who can tell? If Jonah did not tell, we cannot."

And now, sinner, I would thou wouldst catch hold on this. But thou hast something stronger and firmer still, for there is mercy proclaimed to thee this day. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. These are his own words and he himself expressly invites you to come to him. He says "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely;" and he gives you his word for it—"Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." Salvation is free as the air we breathe to every convinced sinner. If thou knowest this day thy need of Christ, take him, he is thine. He is a fountain open for the thirsty. All the preparation thou needest is simply a burning thirst. Then come and drink, and none can say thee nay.

"From the Mount of Calvary,
Where the Saviour deigned to die,
What transporting sounds I hear,
Bursting on my ravished ear!—
Love's redeeming work is done,
Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

Well, then, if thou art invited, "*Who can tell?*" Come, come and try, for "*Who can tell?*"

Yet, I think, the greatest confidence which the king of Nineveh would have would be derived from the following suggestion. "Oh," said he, "if God had meant to destroy us without giving us an opportunity of pardon, he would not have sent Jonah forty days beforehand. He would have given us no time at all. He would simply have given a blow and a word, but the blow would have been first. He would have overthrown the city in his wrath without a single message. What did he to Sodom? He sent no messenger there. The sun rose and the fire descended from God's terrible right hand. Not so Nineveh; it had its warning. And now, sinner, turn thou this to good account. Thou hast had many a warning. Thou art this day warned, nay, more thou art affectionately invited to come to Christ. The voice from the cross is speaking, and each trickling drop of blood crieth, "Amen."

"Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

Now, if the Lord were unwilling to forgive, would he have sent his servants to warn and to invite? If there were not bowels of mercy with him, would he not have said, "Let them alone, they are joined unto idols, let them perish?" It is no small prophecy of God's good intentions to a man when God sends to him a faithful minister. Oh, my hearers, I cannot speak to you with eloquence. I cannot address you with the fervid words of such an one as Whitfield, but this I can say, and God is my witness, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, whether man would hear,

or whether he will forbear. If ye perish, it is not because I have kept back any part of that which I have received of God, who hath sent me. I have broken through the trammels of creed and system that I might free my head of the blood of all men. I have not been content to run in the track of an old and narrow creed, if I felt that it kept me from earnestly pleading with you, and warning you to flee from the wrath to come. I have endangered many a friendship, and brought upon my self no little shame, because I must and will, in this matter, deal earnestly with your souls. 'Tis no child's play to preach. It shall be no child's play to give an account of preaching at the last great tremendous day. You are warned; in God's name I conjure you, ere the gates of mercy are shut upon you—ere life shall end: now, now bethink yourselves. Now may the Spirit of God bring you to your knees, now drive you to prayer, now lead you to faith in the sprinkled blood of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Sinner, remember! if thou perish thou destroyest thyself. Behold, God willeth not thy death, but he bids thee come now. Nay! he doth, as it were, pray thee to return. He says, "Return, ye backsliding children of men." "Oh Israel, return unto me." He says again, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be white as snow." Would that I could draw you! Oh that I had chains on my lips that should bind you in golden fetters to the cross of Christ. Come, sinner, for "*who can tell?*" Nay, I change the sentence. "I can tell"—if ye turn, he will turn unto you. Come ye to him, and he will accept you, for he is a God ready to forgive, and now, this day, he is ready to cast your sins into the depths of the sea, and remember them no more for ever.

III. And now, this shall bring me to the third point, namely, THE URGING OF DIVERS REASONS WHY WE SHOULD IMITATE THE NINEVITES IN REPENTANCE.

It was an old and a horrible custom of past governments, when a man was executed for murder, to allow him to be hung in chains, so that as often as any one passed by the gibbet they might learn, as was thought, the severity of justice. I fear, however, that they more frequently learned the brutality and barbarism of the age. Now, as these were hung in chains as warnings, I would translate this horrible figure into one that shall glitter with joy and delight. God, in order that you may know his mercy, has been pleased to preserve instances thereof, that so often as you look upon them you may be led to say, if such and such an one was saved, why may not I? It is needless for me to refer you to Old Testament and New Testament scriptures. You will remember well the pardon given to David! Surely you have not forgotten the mercy which God had on that chief of sinners, Manasseh! As for the New Testament pardoned sinners, from the thief on the cross to Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, it sufficeth but to hint at them. And now this day behold before your eyes in this place, sinners once like yourselves, who have obtained mercy and are now forgiven. Amongst the thousands in this hall there are not a few who (say some two years ago or less) entered this place out of idle curiosity. I could describe some to you who had never entered a place of worship for twenty or even thirty years. Some of them had been habitual drunkards, their lives had been the abodes of misery; some of them had been harlots, and led others into sin, beside destroying their own bodies and their souls. Into this place they crept, they came merely to listen to the preacher, of whom many a strange thing had been said. Their attention was rivetted. An arrow from the bow of God shot into their hearts and here they are this day. Without boasting I say it, they are my joy and my crown of rejoicing, and shall be such in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If you, who have been like them, but are now repenting of your sins, could hear their testimony as I have done, you would never doubt of the mercy of God. If you could read the account that I have preserved of some of them—sailors, who in every part of the world have sinned—who have never

touched upon land except to commit fornication and wickedness—if I could tell you on the other hand the dreadful iniquities into which some here have plunged in the days of their flesh, you would say, “Surely he is a pardoning God, and methinks that might entice you to come. Oh if there be any such here, and there are many such here, I know, if you are sitting in this hall to-day side by side with some trembling sinner, and you observe the tear dropping from his eye, be not slow to tell him, “I am one of the men that Mr. Spurgeon mentions.” The Lord has saved thee, and be not slow to take the hand of the penitent, and bid him come where you went, and bid him look for mercy where you sought it and found it. And I may say again, if I may speak for myself here to-day, if you knew my own character as it was before conversion, you need none of you despair of mercy. When I went to God confessing my sins to him, I felt myself to be the vilest sinner out of hell. Others might have praised me, but I had not a word to say on my own account. If the hottest flames of the pit had been mine eternal portion it was not one whit more than I deserved. But

“Tell it unto sinners tell,
I am, I am out of hell,”

And forgiven and accepted in Christ. Who then need despair? Who can tell? Come sinner, come, and say this in thine heart, and go and cry unto God in prayer, and lay hold on Christ by faith, saying, “Who can tell?” The innumerable instances of past mercies should stir us up to say, “Who can tell?”

And then again let me remind you—Oh, ye that are now conscious of your guilt, that your only hope for deliverance lies in the mercy of God. When a man knows that he has only one hope left how tenaciously will he cling to it. Some sick man has tried every system of medicine—he has spent nearly all his wealth, and now he has come to the last stage. He is trying the last system of medicine. If this remedy fail, die he must. Do you not readily imagine that he would use this with the greatest diligence, and be as obedient as possible to every command of the physician? And now sinner, it is Christ or hell with thee this day. If Christ save thee not, thou art a lost man. If the cross be not thy salvation, the jaws of hell must soon close upon thee. ‘Tis Christ or nothing. Nay it is Christ or perdition! Lay hold on him then; clutch him; he is thy last, thy only hope. Oh, fly to him: he his thine only refuge. If thou wert pursued by some fierce beast of prey: if there were but *one* tree on some vast plain, albeit, there were but a scanty hope of escape by climbing it, with what speed would thy feet carry thee to it. I see thee running and I come before thee and say, “Stop, why in such haste?” You rush past me crying—“Sir, ‘tis my only chance, ‘tis my only hope; I am devoured, I am rent in pieces if I find not shelter there.” It is your case today. Behold the roaring lion of the pit, athirst for your blood, is after you. Away to the cross; cling to it; *there* is hope; *there* is sure refuge. But apart from that thou art worse than rent in pieces; thou art destroyed for ever and ever.

But for thy encouragement, let me tell thee one other thing, and then I shall have done. Sinner, remember that while it will be a happy thing for thee to be saved, it will be a glorious thing for God to save thee. Men object not to do a thing which is expensive to them, if it bring them in some honor. They will not stoop to do a thing which involves shame and scorn; but if honor goeth with a thing then are they ready enough to do it. Now soul, remember, if God shall save thee it will honor him. Why, wilt thou not honor him if he will but blot out thy sin? I thought when I was seeking mercy, if God would but save me there was nothing I would not do for him. I would be cut in pieces rather than deny him. I would serve him all my life, and he might do what he would with me in heaven. And do you not sometimes feel that if God would but save you, you would sing

loudest of them all in heaven? Would you not love him; creep to the foot of his throne, and cast your crown before his feet, saying: "Lord, not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name be all the glory." God delighteth to save sinners, because this puts jewels in his crown. He is glorified in his justice, but not as he is in his mercy. He appears in silken robes with a golden crown upon his head when he saves sinners. He wears an iron crown when he crushes them. Judgment is his strange work; he does that with his left hand, but his right-handed acts are those of mercy and of love. Hence he puts the righteous always on the right hand that he may be ready to pardon and ready to deliver. Oh, come then soul to Christ. Thou art not about to ask a thing which God is unwilling to give, or that which will slur his escutcheon, or blot his banner. Thou art asking for that which is as glorious to God as it is beneficial to thyself. Come humble soul and cry to Christ, and he will have mercy upon thee.

My only fear in conclusion is, that if any of you have received the slightest impression this morning you will go home and forget it. May I ask you now as a favor that if you have but got so much as a scar under the preaching of the Word, go home alone if you can. Say but little if you are obliged to walk with others, and go straight away to your chamber, fall there on your knees, make a confession of your sin, cry to God for mercy through the blood of Christ, and "*Who can tell?*" Who can tell—this very day there shall be high holiday in heaven over hundreds of sinners who in this Music Hall have first learned to pray—who in this place have first been led to consider their ways and turn to God. I hope our friends will all remain and no one move, while I pray that that may be the case, and all of you that wish it may be so, will solemnly say Amen after the few sentences of prayer I shall utter:—

"Lord, save us this morning. We confess our sin; we ask for mercy humbly through the blood of Christ. We pray thee do not deny us, but let us all appear at thy right hand at last. Here reveal with power, and let many be saved this morning for Jesus' sake." And the people said AMEN.

A Divided Heart

A Sermon

(No. 276)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 25th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.”—Hosea 10:2.

THIS passage may be taken as referring to the people of Israel as a nation, and it is not less applicable to the church of God. It is one grand and grievous fault with the church of Christ at the present day, that it is not merely divided somewhat in its creed, and somewhat also in its practice of the ordinances, but alas, it is also somewhat divided in heart. When the differences are of such a character, that as people of God we can still love each other, and still unite in the common battle against the cause of evil and in the common end of building up the church, then there is but little that is faulty. But when our doctrinal divisions grow to so great a head that we cease to co-operate; when our opinions upon mere ordinances become so acid towards each other, that we can no longer extend the right hand of fellowship to those who differ from us, then indeed is the church of God found faulty. “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” Even Beelzebub with all his craft cannot stand when once his hosts are divided. If Beelzebub be divided against himself, even he must fall, and assuredly this must be the case with those who lack that craft which might tend to overcome disunion. Oh, my brethren, nothing can so soon cast down the church from its high place, mar its glories, and diminish its opportunities of success, as divisions among the hearts of God’s people. If we would grieve the Holy Spirit and cause him to begone; if we would provoke the anger of the Most High and bring down trying providences on the churches, we have nothing to do but to be divided in our hearts and all will be accomplished. If we wish that every vial may empty out its ill, and that every vessel may withhold its oil, we have but to cherish our bickerings till they become animosities; we have but to nurse our animosities till they become hatreds, and all the work will be fully completed. And if this be the case in the church at large, it is peculiarly true in those various sections of it which we now call Apostolic Churches. Oh, my brethren, the smallest church in the world is potent for good when it hath but one heart and one soul; when pastor, elders, deacons, and members, are bound together by a threefold cord that cannot be broken. Then are they mighty against every attack. But however great their numbers, however enormous their wealth, however splendid may be the talents with which they are gifted, they are powerless for good the moment that they become divided amongst themselves. Union is strength. Blessed is the army of the living God, in that day when it goeth forth to battle with one mind, and its soldiers as with the tramp of one man, in undivided march, go onwards towards the attack. But a curse awaiteth that church which runneth hither and thither and which, divided in itself, hath lost the main stay of its strength with which it should batter against the enemy. Division cuts our bowstrings, snaps our spears, hoofs our horses, and burns our chariots in the fire. We are undone the moment the link of love is snapped. Let this perfect bond be once cut in twain and we fall down, and our strength is departed. By union we live, and by disunion we expire.

I intend, however, to take the text this morning specially with reference to our individual condition. We shall look at the separate individual heart of each man. If divisions in the great main body—if separation among the distinct classes of that body should each promote disasters, how much more disastrous must be a division in that better kingdom—the heart of man. If there be civil tumult in the town of Mansoul, even when no enemy attacks its walls, it will be in a sufficiently dangerous position. If the isle of Man be governed by two kings, then is it disorganised, and it will soon be destroyed. I address myself this morning to some of whom it can be said, “their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.” And thus shall I address you, first of all noticing *a fearful disease*; secondly, its *usual symptoms*; thirdly, its *sad effects*; and fourthly, its *future consequences*.

I. Observe, then, that our text describes a FEARFUL DISEASE. Their heart is divided. I have called it a fearful disease, and this will very readily appear if you observe, first of all, the seat of it. It affects a vital part, it is not merely a disease of the hand, that reformation might cure; it is not merely a disease of the foot, that restraint might sometimes mollify; it is not merely a disease of the eye which hath but to be couched to let the light stream in upon it. It is a disease of a vital region—of the heart; a disease in a part so vital that it affects the whole man. The utmost extremity of the frame suffers when once the heart becomes affected, and especially so affected as to be divided. There is no power, no passion, there is no motive, no principle, which does not become vitiated, when once the heart is diseased. Hence it is that Satan, who is always crafty, endeavors to strike at the heart. He will give you the hand if you please; you may be honest. He will give you the eye if you please; you shall be outwardly chaste. He will give you the foot, if you please; you shall appear to run in the way of righteousness. Only let him keep the heart, only let him rule in the citadel, and he will be well content to give up all the rest. John Bunyan describes this as being one of the terms which old Diabolus was said to make with King Shaddai,—“Oh!” said he, “I will give up all the city of Mansoul, if thou wilt but permit me to live in the citadel of the heart.” Surely there was but little in his terms and conditions. Ay but give up everything else; if thou retainest the heart, thou retainest all, O, fiend! for out of the heart are the issues of life.

Thus the disease of our text is one that toucheth a vital part, a part which if once affected, tends to vitiate the whole frame. But you will observe, the disease here described, not only deals with a vital part, but toucheth it after a most serious fashion. It does not simply say the heart palpitates; it doth not declare that the life-floods that issue from it have become more shallow and less rapid, but it declares something worse than all these, namely, that the heart was cleft in twain and utterly divided. A stony heart may be turned to flesh but turn a divided heart into whatsoever you please, so long as it is divided, all is ill. Nothing can go right when that which should be one organ becomes two; when the one motive power begins to send forth its life-floods into two diverse channels, and so creates intestine strife and war. A united heart is life to a man, but if the heart be cut in twain, in the highest, deepest, and most spiritual sense, he dies. It is a disease which is not only affecting a vital part, but affecting it after the most deadly fashion.

But we must observe again of this divided heart, that it is a division in itself peculiarly loathsome. Men who are possessed of it do not feel themselves to be unclean; in fact they will visit all society, they will venture into the church, they will propose to receive her communion, and to be numbered with her members, and they will afterwards go and mingle with the world; and they do not feel that they have become dishonest. They think themselves fit to mingle with honest worldlings, and with sincere Christians too. If a man had spots upon his countenance or some disease that stared everyone else in the face as often as he was beheld surely he would retire from society and endeavor to keep

himself a recluse. But not so the man with a divided heart. He goes everywhere, utterly unconscious that his disease is of the most loathsome character. Shall I show you how it is so? Take the glass and look at the man's heart, and you will discern that it is loathsome, because Satan and sin reigns there. Although the man goes about and has sufficient of what is right and what is wrong, to be uneasy in his sin, yet has he such an intense love of all manner of iniquity, that he allows the loathsome demons to come and dwell in his heart. But his loathsomeness is worse than this, because all the while that he is really living in sin, he is a loathsome hypocrite, pretending that he is a child of God. Of all the things in the world that stink in the nostrils of a honest man, hypocrisy is the worst. If thou be a worldling, be a worldling. If thou serve Satan, serve him. If Baal be god, serve him, but mask not thy service of self and sin by a pretended service of God. Appear to be what thou art, tear off thy masks. The church was never meant to be a masquerade. Stand out in thy true colors. If thou preferest Satan's shrine say so, and let men know it, but if thou wilt serve God, serve him, and do it heartily, as knowing him who is a jealous God and searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. It is a terribly loathsome disease this of a divided heart. If the man were but known, his disease is so loathsome, that the most wicked men in the world would have nothing to do with him. I have known sometimes instances of this. A man who pretended to be religious and regularly attended his place of worship is seen on one occasion entering into a ball-room of the very lowest class. He begins at once to plunge into its gaities, with the most evil intentions. He is at once observed. The right senses even of the wicked themselves are awakened. "Kick that man down stairs," is the unanimous verdict, and he receives it and he deserved it right well. When a man has a divided heart—tries to do right and to do wrong, to serve God and to serve Satan at the same time; I say his disease is of so loathsome and degraded a character, that the very worldling, whose leprosy is on his brow, despises, hates him, and avoids him.

And yet again, not merely is the disease loathsome, but I must observe it is one always difficult to cure, because it is chronic. It is not an acute disease, which brings pain, and suffering, and sorrow with it, but it is chronic, it has got into the very nature of the man. A divided heart, how are you to get at that? If it were a disease in any other part, the lancet might find it out, or some medicine might heal it. But what physician can join together a divided heart? What skillful surgeon can set together the disrupted members of a soul that has been divided between God and mammon? This is a disease which enters into the very nature, and will lie in the blood, though the most powerful medicines search it out. This is a disease, in fact, which nothing but Omnipotent grace can ever overcome. But he has no grace whose heart is divided between God and mammon. He is an enemy to God, he is an injury to the church, he is a despiser of God's Word, he is a sheaf ripening for the harvest of eternal fire. His disease is deeply rooted within him, and if left alone it will come to a most dreadful end—its end is sure destruction.

I must observe once more, and then I will leave this point of the disease, that, according to the Hebrew of my text, this disease is a very difficult one to deal with, from the fact that it is a flattering disease. The text might be rendered—"Their heart flatters them; now are they found faulty." There are many cunning flatterers in the world, but the most cunning is man's own heart. A man's own heart will flatter him even about his sins. A man is a grasping miser—his heart flatters him that he is only exercising proper business habits. A man on the other hand is extravagant and spends the good gifts of God upon his own evil passions; then his heart tells him that he is a liberal soul. The heart turns "sweet into bitter and bitter into sweet." It is so "deceitful above all things," and so "desperately wicked," that it has the impudence to "put darkness for light and light for darkness."

Now when a man has a divided heart, he generally flatters himself. "Well," says he, "it is true I drink too much, but then there is never a time that I refuse a guinea towards a charity. It is true," says he "I am not certainly what I should be in my moral character, but still, see how regularly I keep to my church or chapel. It is true," says he, "I don't now and then mind a trick or two in my trade, but I am always ready to help the poor." And so he imagines that he blots out an evil trait in his character with a good one and thus flatters his heart. And see how self-contented and satisfied he is. The poor child of God is trying his own heart with the deepest possible anxiety; this man knows of no such thing. He is always fully assured that he is right. The true believer is sitting down and turning over his accounts day by day to see whether he be really on the road to heaven or whether he has mistaken his evidence and has been deceived. But this man, self-satisfied, bandages his own eyes and walks deliberately on, singing at every step, straight to his own destruction. I know of some such now. It will not suffice for me simply to state what their character is unless God the Holy Spirit open their eyes. They will be sure not to know their own likeness, even though I should paint it to the very life, and put in every touch and stroke, yet they will say, "Ah he could not refer to me. I am so good and so godly, there could have been no reference to me in anything that he said." Do you know a class of people that pull the most tremendously long faces, that always look so serious, that talk the English language with a kind of unctuous twang, that give a savoury pronunciation to every word they utter? Beware of them. When a man wears all his religion in his face, he has generally but a very small stock in his heart. Those tradesmen that put such a great display in their windows, frequently have very little behind. So with these professors; no one would know they were religious, so they label themselves that you may not make a mistake. You would think they were worldlings, if it were not for their sanctimonious appearance. But by putting that on, they think to glide through the world with credit. I hope they are not imagining that they shall stand accepted before the bar of God and deceive the Omniscient. Alas for them! Their heart is divided. This is no uncommon disease, despite its loathsomeness and its terrible fatality. Rife is it in this day; tens of thousands of Englishmen who are reckoned good and honorable are afflicted with it. Their whole head is sick, and their whole heart faint from the fact that their heart is divided. They lack the courage to be thorough-going sinners, and they have not sincerity enough to be truly-devoted people of God.

II. Having thus described the disease, I proceed to notice its USUAL SYMPTOMS. When a man's heart is divided, one of the most frequent symptoms is *formality* in his religious worship. You know some men, perhaps, who are very stringent believers of a certain form of doctrine, and very great admirers of a certain shape of church rule and government. You will observe them utterly despising, and abhorring, and hating all who differ from their predilections. Albeit the difference be but as a jot or a tittle, they will stand up and fight for every rubric, defend every old rusty nail in the church door, and think every syllable of their peculiar creed should be accepted without challenge. "As it was in the beginning, so must it be now, and so must it ever be even unto the end." Now it is an observation which your experience will probably warrant, as certainly mine does, that mostly these people stand up so fiercely for *the form*, because lacking the *power*, that is all they have to boast of. They have no faith, though they have a creed. They have no life within, and they supply its place with outward ceremony. What wonder therefore that they fiercely defend that? The man who knows how precious the life of godliness is, the man who understands its vitality, its deep-seated, deeply-rooted heart power, he also loves the form, but not as he loves the Spirit. He approves the letter, but he likes the pith and marrow better. He is apt, perhaps to think less of

forms than he should do, for he will mingle first with one body of sincere Christians and then with another, and he will say, "If I can enjoy my Master's presence it is but little matter to me where I am found. If I can but find the name of Christ extolled, and his simple gospel preached, this is all I desire." Not so, the man whose heart is divided who has no soul in godliness. He is bigoted to the extreme, and well—I repeat it—he may be, poor man; all he has is the empty shell. What wonder therefore that he should be ready to fight for it? You will notice many persons punctilious with regard even to the form of our own simple worship. They will have it that there must always be observed, not simply reverent behavior in the house of God, but something more than mere reverence, there must be an abject slavish, tyrannical fear upon the hearts of all who are gathered. They will have it that every jot and tittle of our worship must always be conducted with a certain traditional decorum. Now these people, as frequently as not, know nothing whatever of the power of godliness, and only contend for these little shells because they have not the kernel. They fight for the surface albeit they have never discovered "the deep that coucheth beneath." They know not the precious ores that lie in the rich mines of the gospel, and therefore the surface, covered though it be with weeds, and thistles, is quite enough for them. Formality in religion is very often a trait in the character of a man who has a divided heart.

But this, perhaps, is not the most prominent symptom. Another mark in such a man's character is his *inconsistency*. You must not see him always, if you would have a good opinion of him. You must be guarded as to the days on which you call upon him. Call upon him on a Sunday and you will find him like a saint; don't call upon him on the Saturday night—you might, perhaps, find him very much like the worst of sinners. Oh! of all the men in the world whom I fear most for, because I know their dangerous and deceitful position, they are those among you who try with all your might to follow the church and yet follow the world. You can come up and sing the sacred hymns of Zion one evening, and another time you can go to your haunts and sing a profane and lascivious song. You can drink one day at the table of the Lord and another day at the table of devils. You appear to run first of all with God's people in his service, and then afterwards run with the multitude to do evil. Ah, men and brethren, this, indeed, is a terrible fact—a terrible index of a frightful disease. You must have a divided heart if you lead an inconsistent life. It is a happy circumstance when a minister can believe of his church that he has no hypocrite in the whole number, but I am bold to say, though with the deepest sorrow, this is more than I could believe of so large a church as that over which I am called to preside. Ah, friends, there may be some of you who practice sins unseen by your pastor's eye. Neither elder or deacon has yet tracked you out. You have been cunning in your iniquity. Perhaps your sin is of such an order that church discipline would altogether fail to touch it. You know, however, and your conscience tells you, that your life is not consistent with your profession. I adjure you, by the living God, as you and I must stand at the last great day face to face at his tremendous bar, either give up your profession, or be true to it. Cease to be called a Christian, or else be a Christian in truth. Seek more grace, that you may live up to the example of your Master, or else I entreat of you—and do it honestly, and if you would take me at my word, I should rejoice that you had done so—renounce your membership, and no longer make a profession of godliness. An inconsistent life, I say, is a sure token of a divided heart.

And again I must observe there is another token of a divided heart, namely—*variableness in object*. I might depict a character which you have met with often in your life. A man who attends a public meeting upon some religious matter is seized with a sudden enthusiasm to do good. If he will not be a missionary to the heathen himself, yet he will undertake to devote of his substance to

the cause, and for the next week there is nothing on his tongue but the missionary enterprise. A little while after he attends some political meeting, and now there is nothing before him but the reformation of politics. Another week, and he is called to attend some sanitary commission, and now there is nothing wanted but proper drainage. Religion, politics, social economy, each in its turn, and everything else must give place to the last topic which has engrossed his attention. These men run first in one direction—then in another. Their religion is all spasmodic. They are taken with it as men are taken with an ague. They shake by fits, and anon they are calm. They are sometimes hot and feverish, and anon they are chilly and cold. They take up their religion, and then they lay it down again. What does this prove concerning them, but that they have a divided heart, and they are in the sight of God diseased, loathsome persons, who shall never see his face with joy.

To conclude the list of symptoms. Once more, *frivolity in religion* is often a token of a divided heart; and here I address myself more immediately to those of my own age. It is perhaps too common a sin with young persons to treat religion with a light and frivolous air. There is a seriousness which is well becoming, especially in youthful Christians. Cheerfulness should be the constant aim of the aged. Their tendency is towards sadness. Perhaps a proper seriousness and solemnity should be the aim of the youthful believer, whose tendency will rather be to levity than to despondency. Oh, my brethren, when we can talk about religious things with flippancy; when we can quote texts of Scripture in order to make jests upon them, when we come up to the Lord's table as if it were but a common repast; when we come to baptism as though it were but an ordinary observance, about which no solemnity is to be found—then I fear we prove that our heart is divided. And I know that any soul conscious of its guilt, if it has really been brought to know the love of Christ, will always come to sacred things in a altered manner. We do not come to the Lord's table with lightness of heart. There have been times when it has seemed too solemn a matter for us to come at all; and as for baptism, he that comes to baptism without having searched his heart, without having looked well to his motives, and without true devotion of spirit, comes altogether in vain. As the wrong communicant may eat and drink damnation to himself, so may he who would be thus wrongly baptized receive condemnation instead of a blessing. Frivolity of spirit is often a sign of a divided heart.

III. This brings us to the third point, the *sad effects* of a divided heart. When a man's heart is divided, he is at once everything that is bad. With regard to himself he is an unhappy man. Who can be happy while he has rival powers within his own breast. The soul must find a nest for itself, or else it cannot find rest. The bird that would seek to rest upon two twigs would never have peace, and the soul that endeavors to find two resting places, first, the world, and then the Saviour, will never have any joy or comfort. A united heart is a happy heart; hence David says, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." They that give themselves wholly to God are a blessed people, for they find that the ways of religion are "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Men who are neither this nor that, neither one thing nor another, are always uneasy and miserable. The fear of discovery, and the consciousness of being wrong, conspire together to agitate the soul and make it full of unease, disease, and restlessness of spirit. Such a man is unhappy in himself.

He is in the next place *useless in the church*. Of what good is such a man to us? We cannot put him in the pulpit to propound that gospel he does not practice. We cannot put him in the deaconship to serve the church which his life would ruin. We cannot commit to his charge the spiritual matters of the church in the eldership, because we discern that not being spiritual himself, he is not to be entrusted with them. In no respect is he of any good to us. "Reprobate silver shall men call them."

His name may be in the church-book, but it had better be taken away. He may sit among us and give us his contribution, we should be better without it and without him than with either, though he should double his talent and treble his contribution. We know that no man who is not united in his heart vitally and entirely to Christ, can ever be of the slightest service to the church of God.

But not only this; he is a man *dangerous to the world*. Such a man is like a leper going abroad in the midst of healthy people; he spreads the disease. The drunkard is a leper set apart by himself; he doth but little harm comparatively, for he in his drunkenness is like the leper when he is driven from society. His very drunkenness cries out, "Unclean, unclean, unclean!" But this man is a professor of religion and therefore tolerated. He says he is a Christian, and therefore he is admitted into all society, and yet he is inwardly full of rottenness and deception. Though outwardly whitewashed like a sepulcher, he is more dangerous to the world, I say, than the most vicious of men. Tie him up—let him not go loose; build a prison for him. But what am I saying? If you would build a prison for hypocrites, all London would not suffice for ground for the prisons. Oh my brethren, notwithstanding the impossibility of binding them, I do say that the maddest dog in the hottest weather is not one-half so dangerous to men as a man who hath a divided heart, one who runs about with the rabid poison of his hypocrisy upon his lips, and destroys the souls of men by contamination.

Not only unhappy himself, useless to the church, and dangerous to the world but he is contemptible to everybody. When he is found out nobody receives him. Scarcely will the world own him, and the church will have nothing to administer to him but its censure.

The most solemn consideration, however, is that this man is *reprobate* in the sight of God. To the eye of infinite purity he is one of the most obnoxious and detestable of beings. His heart is divided. A pure and holy God hates, first, his sin, and secondly, the lies with which he endeavors to cover it. Oh, if there be a place where sinners are more loathsome to God than anywhere else, it is in his church. A dog in its kennel is well enough; but a dog in the throne-room is quite out of place. A sinner in the world is bad enough, but in the church he is hideous. A madman in an asylum is a creature to be pitied, but a madman who protests he is not mad, and will thrust himself among us that he may obtain means of doing mischief, is not merely to be pitied, he is to be avoided, and needs to be restrained. God hateth sin anywhere, but when sin puts its fingers upon his divine altar; when it comes and lays its insolent hand upon the sacrifice that is burning there, then God spurns it from him with disgust. Of all men, who stand in the most likely place to receive the mightiest thunderbolt, and the most terrible lightning's flash, those are the men who have a divided heart, and profess to serve God while with their souls they are serving sin. Take heed, sinner, take heed, running on in thy sin thou wilt meet with punishment; but after all, O hypocrite, look well to thy ways, for thy sin and thy lie together shall bring down a dread and swift destruction upon thy devoted head.

IV. In conclusion I have to address some remarks to you with regard to the FUTURE PUNISHMENT of the man whose heart is divided, unless he be rescued by a great salvation.

I have endeavored to preach faithfully this morning, as faithfully as I could, but I am conscious that many of the children of God do not find food under such a sermon as this, nor is it my intention that they should do so. It is not rightly possible to blend the sieve of sifting, with the bushel of the gospel. We cannot well bring you the wheat and the sieve too. This morning I have sought to take the fan ministerially into my hand, and thoroughly purge this floor, in the name of him who shall be the great "Purger" at the last day. We all need it whether we know it or not. The best Christian

needs sometimes to question himself as to his motives. And when God's children are not fed, it is often more profitable to them to be led to examine themselves, than it would be if they had some rich promise to feed upon. My hearers, out of so vast a number this morning, are there none among you with divided hearts? Is it possible that this whole congregation is made up of sincere Christians, truly enlightened, called, and saved? Is there not one man, who, mistaking his place, has put himself among the sheep when he should have been among the goats? Is there not one man here who without making a mistake has dared impudently to thrust himself into the number of God's priests, when he is really a worshipper of Baal? Let me then, in the last place, that I may with faithfulness discharge my mission, describe the terrible condition of the hypocrite when God shall come to judge the world.

He comes with brazen face, he comes in the midst of the congregation of the righteous. The mandate has gone from the throne, "Gather out first the tares!" He hears the mandate, and his cheek pales not. His impudence continues with him even now. He would still knock at the door, and say, "Lord! Lord! open to me." The dividing angel flies. Terror is on the face of the wicked, as on the left the tares are bound in bundles to burn. Imagine, however the still greater consternation of this individual, who, standing in the midst of ministers, saints and apostles, suddenly finds himself about to be gleaned from them. With a tremendous swoop, like an eagle descending from its lofty height, the death angel bears upon him, snatches him away, and claims him as his own. "Thou art," says the black angel, "Thou art a tare. Thou hast grown side by side with the wheat, but that has not changed thy nature. The dew that falls upon the wheat has fallen upon thee; the sun which shone upon it thou hast enjoyed also, but thou art still a tare, and thy doom remaineth the same. Thou shalt be bound up with the rest in bundles to be burned." O hearer, what must be his consternation when with mighty hand that angel plucks him up by the roots, carries him away, and he that thought himself a saint is bound up with sinners for destruction!

And now imagine the reception that he meets. He is brought into the midst of the wicked—the wicked who once with Pharaonic tongue he had reproved. "Here he comes," say they, "the man who instructed us, the *good* man who taught us to do better, here he comes himself, found out at last to be no better than those whom he despised." And then imagine, if you dare, the inner dungeon, the reserved seats of that fiery abode, and the heaviest chain of despair—imagine, I say, if you can, the terrible destruction, terrible beyond every other, which shall overwhelm the man who in this world deceived the church and dishonored God, but who is now detected to his shame. Common sinners have the common prison, but this man shall be thrust into the inner prison, and made fast in the stocks of despair. Tremble, professors, tremble, you who are half and half religious men, tremble, you who pretend to fear God, but like the Samaritans, worship your idols also. O, tremble now lest your trembling should come upon you in a day when you are not aware of it, when you shall long for the rocks to hide, and for the mountains to cover you, but shall be without a shelter in the day of the fierce anger of the God of the whole earth.

And now, I cannot send you away without preaching the gospel for a moment or two. I have, perhaps, one here who is saying, "Sir, my heart is not only divided, but it is broken." Ah, there is a great deal of difference between a divided heart and a broken heart. The divided heart is cut in twain, the broken heart is broken in pieces, all asunder, and yet it is not divided. It is all in pieces, in one sense, as to its proud hope, and it is melted, in another sense, as to its earnest longing that it may be saved. Poor broken heart, I was not rebuking *thee*. Art thou desirous thy morning to have thy *sins* put away. Then from the bottom of thy poor broken heart cry to day, Lord, save me from

hypocrisy. Whatever I may be, do not permit me to think I am one of thine if I am not." Are you breathing out this prayer to God, "Lord, make me truly thine. Put me among thy children. Let me call thee 'my Father,' and not turn away from thee. Give me a new heart and a right spirit; O wash me in the blood of Christ, and make me clean. Make me what thou wouldst have me be, and I will praise thee for ever." Remember, my dear hearer if that is the desire of thy heart, thou art this day bidden to believe that Christ is able to save thee, and willing to save thee, and waiting to be gracious unto thee, and more ready to bestow mercy than thou art to receive it. Therefore thou art commanded to trust him, for all thy sins have been punished on him as thy surety, and for the sake of Christ, God is willing now to receive thee, now to bless thee. Come close with him this morning. Lift thine eye to him that did die upon the tree. Put thy trust in him who is my Redeemer, and thy Redeemer too; let the blood which flows from his side be received into thy heart. Open thy poor wounds, and say, "My Master, heal these wounds for me. O Jesus! I know no other trust. If thou wilt save me I will know no other love. My heart is undivided in its love, it looks alone to thee; it shall be soon undivided in its gratitude; I will praise thee and thee alone. Poor heart-broken penitent, I said not ill when I contradicted myself by saying, "Though thy heart is broken, it is not divided." Bring it just as it is, and say, "Lord, receive me through the blood of Christ, and let me be thine now, and thine for ever, through Jesus." Amen.

The Blood of the Everlasting Covenant

A Sermon

(No. 273)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 4th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“The blood of the everlasting covenant.”—Hebrews 13:20.

ALL GOD’S dealings with men have had a covenant character. It hath so pleased Him to arrange it, that he will not deal with us except through a covenant, nor can we deal with Him except in the same manner. Adam in the garden was under a covenant with God and God was in covenant with Him. That covenant he speedily brake. There is a covenant still existing in all its terrible power—terrible I say, because it has been broken on man’s part, and therefore God will most surely fulfill its solemn threatenings and sanctions. That is the covenant of works. By this he dealt with Moses, and in this doth he deal with the whole race of men as represented in the first Adam. Afterwards when God would deal with Noah, it was by a covenant; and when in succeeding ages he dealt with Abraham, he was still pleased to bind himself to him by a covenant. That covenant he preserved and kept, and it was renewed continually to many of his seed. God dealt not even with David, the man after his own heart, except with a covenant. He made a covenant with his anointed; and beloved, he dealeth with you and me this day still by covenant. When he shall come in all his terrors to condemn, he shall smite by covenant—namely, by the sword of the covenant of Sinai; and if he comes in the splendors of his grace to save, he still comes to us by covenant—namely, the covenant of Zion; the covenant which he has made with the Lord Jesus Christ, the head and representative of his people. And mark, whenever we come into close and intimate dealings with God, it is sure to be, on our part, also by covenant. We make with God, after conversion, a covenant of gratitude; we come to him sensible of what he has done for us, and we devote ourselves to him. We set our seal to that covenant when in baptism we are united with his church; and day by day, so often as we come around the table of the breaking of the bread, we renew the vow of our covenant, and thus we have personal intercourse with God. I cannot pray to him except through the covenant of grace; and I know that I am not his child unless I am his, first through the covenant whereby Christ purchased me, and secondly, through the covenant by which I have given up myself, and dedicated all that I am and all that I have to him. It is important, then, since the covenant is the only ladder which reaches from earth to heaven—since it is the only way in which God has intercourse with us, and by which we can deal with him, that we should know how to discriminate between covenant and covenant; and should not be in any darkness or error with regard to what is the covenant of grace, and what is not. It shall be our endeavor, this morning, to make as simple and as plain as possible, the matter of the covenant spoken of in our text, and I shall thus speak—first upon the *covenant of grace*; secondly, *its everlasting character*; and thirdly, the relationship which the blood bears to it. “*The blood of the everlasting covenant.*”

I. First of all, then, I have to speak this morning of THE COVENANT mentioned in the text; and I observe that we can readily discover at first sight *what the covenant is not*. We see at once that this is not the covenant of works, for the simple reason that this is an everlasting covenant.

Now the covenant of works was not everlasting in any sense whatever. It was not eternal; it was first made in the garden of Eden. It had a beginning, it has been broken; it will be violated continually and will soon be wound up and pass away: therefore, it is not everlasting in any sense. The covenant of works cannot bear an everlasting title; but as the one in my text is an everlasting covenant, therefore it is not a covenant of works. God made a covenant first of all with the human race, which ran in this wise: "If thou, O man, wilt be obedient, thou shalt live and be happy, but if thou wilt be disobedient, thou shalt perish. In the day that thou disobey me thou shalt die. That covenant was made with all of us in the person of our representative, the first Adam. If Adam had kept that covenant, we believe we should everyone of us have been preserved. But inasmuch as he broke the covenant, you and I, and all of us, fell down and were considered henceforth as the heirs of wrath, as inheritors of sin as prone to every evil and subject to every misery. That covenant has passed away with regard to God's people; it has been put away through the new and better covenant which has utterly and entirely eclipsed it by its gracious glory.

Again, I may remark that the covenant here meant is not the covenant of gratitude which is made between the loving child of God and his Saviour. Such a covenant is very right and proper. I trust all of us who know the Saviour have said in our very hearts:—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

We have given up everything to him. But that covenant is not the one in the text, for the simple reason that the covenant in our text is an everlasting one. Now ours was only written out some few years ago. It would have been despised by us in the earlier parts of our life, and cannot at the very utmost be so old as ourselves.

Having thus readily shown what this covenant is not, may I observe *what this covenant is*. And here it will be necessary for me to subdivide this head again and to speak of it thus: To understand a covenant, you must know who are the contracting parties; secondly, what are the stipulations of the contract; thirdly, what are the objects of it; and then, if you would go still deeper, you must understand something of the motives which lead the contracting parties to form the covenant between themselves.

1. Now, in this covenant of grace, we must first of all observe *the high contracting parties* between whom it was made. The covenant of grace was made before the foundation of the world between God the Father, and God the Son; or to put it in a yet more scriptural light, it was made mutually between the three divine persons of the adorable Trinity. This covenant was not made mutually between God and man. Man did not at that time exist; but Christ stood in the covenant as man's representative. In that sense we will allow that it was a covenant between God and man, but not a covenant between God and any man personally and individually. It was a covenant between God with Christ, and through Christ indirectly with all the blood-bought seed who were loved of Christ from the foundation of the world. It is a noble and glorious thought, the very poetry of that old Calvinistic doctrine which we teach, that long ere the day-star knew its place, before God had spoken existence out of nothing, before angel's wing had stirred the unnavigated ether, before a solitary song had distributed the solemnity of the silence in which God reigned supreme, he had entered into solemn council with himself, with his Son, and with his Spirit, and had in that council decreed, determined, proposed, and predestinated the salvation of his people. He had, moreover, in the covenant arranged the ways and means, and fixed and settled everything which should work together for the effecting of the purpose and the decree. My soul flies back now, winged by

imagination and by faith, and looks into that mysterious council-chamber, and by faith I behold the Father pledging himself to the Son, and the Son pledging himself to the Father, while the Spirit gives his pledge to both, and thus that divine compact, long to be hidden in darkness, is completed and settled—the covenant which in these latter days has been read in the light of heaven, and has become the joy, and hope, and boast of all the saints.

2. And now, what were *the stipulations of this covenant*? They were somewhat in the wise. God has foreseen that man after creation would break the covenant of works; that however mild and gentle the tenure upon which Adam had possession of Paradise, yet that tenure would be too severe for him, and he would be sure to kick against it, and ruin himself. God had also foreseen that his elect ones, whom he had chosen out of the rest of mankind would fall by the sin of Adam, since they, as well as the rest of mankind, were represented in Adam. The covenant therefore had for its end the restoration of the chosen people. And now we may readily understand what were the stipulations. On the Father's part, thus run the covenant. I cannot tell you it in the glorious celestial tongue in which it was written: I am fain to bring it down to the speech which suiteth to the ear of flesh, and to the heart of the mortal. Thus, I say, run the covenant, in ones like these: "I, the Most High Jehovah, do hereby give unto my only begotten and well-beloved Son, a people, countless beyond the number of stars, who shall be by him washed from sin, by him preserved, and kept, and led, and by him, at last, presented before my throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. I covenant by oath, and swear by myself, because I can swear by no greater, that these whom I now give to Christ shall be for ever the objects of my eternal love. Them I will forgive through the merit of the blood. To these will I give a perfect righteousness; these will I adopt and make my sons and daughters, and these shall reign with me through Christ eternally." Thus run that glorious side of the covenant. The Holy Spirit also, as one of the high contracting parties on this side of the covenant, gave his declaration, "I hereby covenant," saith he, "that all whom the Father giveth to the Son, I will in due time quicken. I will show them their need of redemption; I will cut off from them all groundless hope, and destroy their refuges of lies. I will bring them to the blood of sprinkling; I will give them faith whereby this blood shall be applied to them, I will work in them every grace; I will keep their faith alive; I will cleanse them and drive out all depravity from them, and they shall be presented at last spotless and faultless." This was the one side of the covenant, which is at this very day being fulfilled and scrupulously kept. As for the other side of the covenant this was the part of it, engaged and covenanted by Christ. He thus declared, and covenanted with his Father: "My Father, on my part I covenant that in the fullness of time I will become man. I will take upon myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world, and for my people I will keep the law perfectly. I will work out a spotless righteousness, which shall be acceptable to the demands of thy just and holy law. In due time I will bear the sins of all my people. Thou shalt exact their debts on me; the chastisement of their peace I will endure, and by my stripes they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. I will magnify thy law, and make it honourable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of thy law, and all the vials of thy wrath shall be emptied and spent upon my head. I will then rise again; I will ascend into heaven; I will intercede for them at thy right hand; and I will make myself responsible for every one of them, that not one of those whom thou hast given me shall ever be lost, but I will bring all my sheep of whom, by thy blood, thou hast constituted me the shepherd—I will bring every one safe to thee at last." Thus ran the covenant; and now, I think, you have a clear idea of what it was and how it stands—the covenant

between God and Christ, between God the Father and God the Spirit, and God the Son as the covenant head and representative of all Gods elect. I have told you, as briefly as I *could* what were the stipulations of it. You will please to remark, my dear friends, that the covenant is, on one side, perfectly fulfilled. God the Son has paid the debts of all the elect. He has, for us men and for our redemption, suffered the whole of wrath divine. Nothing remaineth now on this side of the question except that he shall continue to intercede, that he may safely bring all his redeemed to glory.

On the side of the Father this part of the covenant has been fulfilled to countless myriads. God the Father and God the Spirit have not been behindhand in their divine contract. And mark you, this side shall be as fully and as completely finished and carried out as the other. Christ can say of what he promised to do. "It is finished!" and the like shall be said by all the glorious covenanters. All for whom Christ died shall be pardoned, all justified, all adopted. The Spirit shall quicken them all, shall give them all faith, shall bring them all to heaven, and they shall, every one of them, without let or hindrance, stand accepted in the beloved, in the day when the people shall be numbered, and Jesus shall be glorified.

3. And now having seen who were the high contracting parties, and what were the terms of the covenant made between them, let us see what were *the objects of this covenant* Was this covenant made for every man of the race of Adam? Assuredly not; we discover the secret by the visible. That which is in the covenant is to be seen in due time by the eye and to be heard with the ear. I see multitudes of men perishing, continuing wantonly in their wicked ways, rejecting the offer of Christ which is presented to them in the Gospel day after day, treading under foot the blood of the Son of Man, defying the Spirit who strives with them; I see these men going on from bad to worse at last perishing in their sins. I have not the folly to believe that they have any part in the covenant of grace. Those who die impenitent, the multitudes who reject the Saviour, are clearly proved to have no part and no lot in the sacred covenant of divine grace; for if they were interested in that, there would be certain marks and evidences which would show us this. We should find that in due time in this life they would be brought to repentance, would be washed in the Saviour's blood, and would be saved. The covenant—to come at once straight to the matter, however offensive the doctrine may be—the covenant has relationship to the elect and none besides. Does this offend you? Be ye offended ever more. What said Christ? "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine." If Christ prayeth for none but for the chosen, why should ye be angry that ye are also taught from the Word of God that in the covenant there was provision made for the like persons, that they might receive eternal life. As many as shall believe, as many as shall trust in Christ, as many as shall persevere unto the end, as many as shall enter into the eternal rest, so many and no more are interested in the covenant of divine grace.

4. Furthermore, we have to consider what were the motives of this covenant. Why was the covenant made at all? There was no compulsion or constraint on God. As yet there was no creature. Even could the creature have an influence on the Creator, there was none existing in the period when the covenant was made. We can look nowhere for God's motive in the covenant except it be in himself, for of God it could be said literally in that day, "I am, and there is none beside me." Why then did he make the covenant? I answer, absolute sovereignty dictated it. But why were certain men the objects of it and why not others? I answer, sovereign grace guided the pen. It was not the merit of man, it was nothing which God foresaw in us that made him choose many and leave others to go on in their sins. It was nothing in them, it was sovereignty and grace combined

that made the divine choice. If you, my brethren and sisters, have a good hope that you are interested in the covenant of grace, you must sing that song—

“What was there in me to merit esteem, or give the Creator delight?

’Twas even so Father I ever sing, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

“He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy,” “for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” His sovereignty elected, and his grace distinguished, and immutability decreed. No motive dictated the election of the individuals, except a motive in himself of love and of divine sovereignty. Doubtless the grand intention of God in making the covenant at all was his own glory; any motive inferior to that would be beneath his dignity. God must find his motives in himself: he has not to look to moths and worms for motives for his deeds. He is the “I AM.”

“He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”

He doth as he wills in the armies of heaven. Who can stay his hand and say unto him, “What doest thou?” Shall the clay ask the potter for the motive for his making it into a vessel? Shall the thing formed before its creation dictate to its Creator? No, let God be God, and let man shrink into his native nothingness, and if God exalt him, let him not boast as though God found a reason for the deed in man. He finds his motives in himself. He is self-contained, and findeth nothing beyond nor needeth anything from any but himself. Thus have I, as fully as time permits this morning, discussed the first point concerning the covenant. May the Holy Spirit lead us into this sublime truth.

II. But now, in the second place, we come to notice ITS EVERLASTING CHARACTER. It is called an everlasting covenant. And here you observe at once its *antiquity*. The covenant of grace is the oldest of all things. It is sometimes a subject of great joy to me to think that the covenant of grace is older than the covenant of works. The covenant of works had a beginning, but the covenant of grace had not; and blessed be God the covenant of works has its end, but the covenant of grace shall stand fast when heaven and earth shall pass away. The antiquity of the covenant of grace demands our grateful attention. It is a truth which tends to elevate the mind. I know of no doctrine more grand than this. It is the very soul and essence of all poetry, and in sitting down and in sitting down and meditating upon it. I do confess my spirit has sometimes been ravished with delight. Can you conceive the idea that before all things God thought of you? That when as yet he had not made his mountains, he had thought of thee, poor puny worm? Before the magnificent constellations began to shine, and ere the great centre of the world had been fixed, and all the mighty planets and divers worlds had been made to revolve around it, then had God fixed the centre of his covenant, and ordained the number of those lesser stars which should revolve round that blessed centre, and derive light therefrom. Why, when one is taken up with some grand conceptions of the boundless universe, when with the astronomers we fly through space, when with we find it without end, and the starry hosts without number, does it not seem marvelous that God should give poor insignificant man the preference beyond even the whole universe besides? Oh this cannot make us proud, because it is a divine truth, but it must make us feel happy. Oh believer, you think yourself nothing, but God does not think so of you. Men despise you but God remembered you before he made anything. The covenant of love which he made with his Son on your behalf is older than the hoary ages, and if ye fly back when as yet time had not begun, before those massive rocks that bear the marks of

gray old age upon them, had begun to be deposited, he had loved and chosen you, and made a covenant on your behalf. Remember well these ancient things of the eternal hills.

Then, again, it is an everlasting covenant from its *sureness*. Nothing is everlasting which is not secure. Man may erect his structures and think they may last for ever, but the Tower of Babel has crumbled, and the very Pyramids bear signs of ruin. Nothing which man has made is everlasting, because he cannot ensure it against decay. But as for the covenant of grace, well David say of it, "It is ordered in all things and sure." It is

"Signed, and sealed, and ratified,
In all things ordered well."

There is not an "if" or a "but" in the whole of it from beginning to end. Free-will hates God's "shalls" and "wills," and likes man's "ifs" and "buts," but there are no "ifs" and "buts" in the covenant of grace. Thus the tenure runs: "I will" and "they shall." Jehovah swears it and the Son fulfills it. It is—it must be true. It must be sure, for "I AM" determines. "Hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" It is a sure covenant. I have sometimes said, if any man were about to build a bridge or a house if he would leave me just one single stone or one timber to put where I liked, I would undertake that his house would fall down. Let me if there is anyone about to construct a bridge, have just simply the placing of one stone—I will select which stone it shall be—and I will defy him to build a bridge that shall stand. I should simply select the key-stone and then he might erect whatever he pleased and it should soon fall. Now, the Armenian's covenant is one that cannot stand because there are one or two bricks in it (and that is putting it in the slightest form; I might have said, "because every stone in it," and that would be nearer the mark) that are dependent on the will of man. It is left to the will of the creator whether he will be saved or not. If he will not, there is no constraining influence that can master and overcome his will. There is no promise that any influence shall be strong enough to overcome him, according to the Armenian. So the question is left to man, and God the mighty Builder—though he put stone on stone massive as the universe—yet may be defeated by this creature. Out upon such blasphemy! The whole structure, from beginning to end, is in the hand of God. The very terms and conditions of that covenant are become its seals and guarantees, seeing that Jesus has fulfilled them all. Its full accomplishment in every jot and title is sure, and must be fulfilled by Christ Jesus, whether man will or man will not. It is not the creature's covenant, it is the Creator's. It is not man's covenant, it is the Almighty's covenant, and he will carry it out and perform it, the will of man notwithstanding. For this is the very glory of grace—that man hates to be saved—that he is enmity to him, yet God will have him redeemed—that God's consensus is. "You shall," and man's intention is "I will not, and God's "shall" conquers man's "I will not." Almighty grace rides victoriously over the neck of free will and leads it captive in glorious captivity to the all-conquering power of irresistible grace and love. It is a sure covenant, and therefore deserves the title of everlasting.

Furthermore, it is not only sure, but it is immutable. If it were not *immutable*, it could not be everlasting. That which changes passes away. We may be quite sure that anything that has the word "change" on it, will sooner or later die, and be put away as a thing of nought. But in the covenant, everything is immutable. Whatever God has established must come to pass, and not word, or line, or letter, can be altered. Whatever the Spirit voweth shall be done, and whatever God the Son promised hath been fulfilled, and shall be consummated at the day of his appearing. Oh if we could believe that the sacred lines could be erased—that the covenant could be blotted and blurred, why then my dear friends, we might lie down and despair. I have heard it said by some preachers, that

when the Christian is holy, he is in the covenant; that when he sins, he is crossed out again; that when he repents, he is put in again, and if he fails he is scratched out once more; and so he goes in and out of the door, as he would in and out of his own house. He goes in at one door and out of another. He is sometimes the child of God, and sometimes the child of the devil—sometimes an heir of heaven, and anon an heir of hell. And I know one man who went so far as to say that although a man might have persevered through grace for sixty years, yet should he fall away the last year of his life—if he should sin and die so, he would perish everlastingly, and all his faith, and all the love which God had manifested to him in the day's gone by would go for nothing. I am very happy to say that such a notion of God is just the very notion I have of the devil. I could not believe in such a God, and could not bow down before him. A god that loves today and hates tomorrow; a God that gives a promise, and yet foreknows after all that man shall not see the promise fulfilled; a God that forgives and punishes—that justifies and afterwards executes—is a God that I cannot endure. He is not the God of the Scriptures I am certain, for *he* is immutable, just, holy, and true, and having loved his own, he will love them to the end, and if he hath given a promise to any man, the promise shall be kept, and that man once in grace, is in grace forever, and shall without fall by-and-by enter into glory.

And then to finish up this point. The covenant is everlasting because *it will never run itself out*. It will be fulfilled but it will stand firm. When Christ hath completed all, and brought every believer to heaven; when the Father hath seen all his people gathered in—the covenant it is true, will come to a consummation, but not to a conclusion, for thus the covenant runs: The heirs of grace shall be blessed for ever, and as long as “for ever” lasts, this everlasting covenant will demand the happiness, the security, the glorification, of every object of it.

III. Having thus noticed the everlasting character of the covenant, I conclude by the sweetest and most precious portion of the doctrine—the relation which the blood bears to it—**THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT**. The blood of Christ stands in a fourfold relationship to the covenant. *With regard to Christ*, his precious blood shed in Gethsemane, in Gabbatha and Golgotha, is *the fulfillment* of the covenant. By this blood sin is canceled; by Jesus' agonies justice is satisfied; by his death the law is honoured; and by that precious blood in all its mediatorial efficacy, and in all its cleansing power, Christ fulfills all that He stipulated to do on the behalf of his people towards God. Oh, believer, look to the blood of Christ, and remember that there is Christ's part of the covenant carried out. And now, there remains nothing to be fulfilled but God's part, there is nothing for thee to do; Jesus has done it all; there is nothing for free will to supply; Christ has done everything that God can demand. The blood is the fulfillment of the debtor's side of the covenant, and now God becometh bound by his own solemn oath to show grace and mercy to all whom Christ has redeemed by his blood. With regard to the blood in another respect, it is *to God the Father the bond* of the covenant. When I see Christ dying on the cross, I see the everlasting God from that time, if I may use the term of him who ever must be free, bound by his own oath and covenant to carry out every stipulation. Does the covenant say, “A new heart will I give thee, and a right spirit will I put within thee?” It must be done, for Jesus died, and Jesus' death is the seal of the covenant. Does it say, “I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean; from all their iniquities will I cleanse them?” Then it must be done, for Christ has fulfilled his part. And, therefore, now we can present the covenant no more as a thing of doubt; but as our claim on God through Christ, and coming humbly on our knees, pleading that covenant, our heavenly Father

will not deny the promises contained therein, but will make every one of them yea and amen to us through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Then, again, the blood of the covenant has relation *to us as the objects* of the covenant, and that is its third light; it is not only a fulfillment as regards Christ, and a bond as regards his Father, but it is *an evidence* as regards ourselves. And here, dear brothers and sisters, let me speak affectionately to you. Are you relying wholly upon the blood? Has his blood—the precious blood of Christ—been laid to your conscience? Have you seen your sins pardoned, through his blood? Have you received forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus? Are you glorying in his sacrifice, and is his cross your only hope and refuge? Then you are in the covenant. Some men want to know whether they are elect. We cannot tell them unless they will tell us this. Dost thou believe? Is thy faith fixed on the precious blood? Then thou art in the covenant. And oh, poor sinner, if thou hast nothing to recommend thee; if thou art standing back, and saying “I dare not come! I am afraid! I am not in the covenant!” still Christ bids thee come. “Come unto *me*,” saith he. “If thou canst not come to the covenant Father, come to the covenant Surety. Come unto *me* and I will give thee rest.” And when thou hast come to him, and his blood has been applied to thee doubt not, but that in the red roll of election stands thy name. Canst thou read thy name in the bloody characters of a Saviour’s atonement? Then shalt thou read it one day in the golden letters of the Father’s election. He that believeth is elected. The blood is the symbol, the token, the earnest, the surety, the seal of the covenant of grace to thee. It must ever be the telescope through which thou canst look to see the things that are afar off. Thou canst not see thy election with the naked eye, but through the blood of Christ thou canst see it clear enough. Trust thou in the blood, poor sinner, and then the blood of the everlasting covenant is a proof that thou art an heir of heaven. Lastly, the blood stands in a relationship *to all three*, and here I may add that *the blood is the glory of all*. To the Son it is the fulfillment, to the Father the bond, to the sinner the evidence, and to all—To Father, Son, and sinner—it is the common glory and the common boast. In this the Father is well pleased; in this the Son also, with joy, looks down and sees the purchase of his agonies; and in this must the sinner ever find his comfort and his everlasting song,—“Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, are my glory, my song, for ever and ever!”

And now, my dear hearers, I have one question to ask, and I have done. Have you the hope that you are in the covenant? Have you put your trust in the blood? Remember, though you imagine, perhaps, from what I have been saying, that the gospel is restricted, that the gospel is freely preached to all. The decree is limited, but the good news is as wide as the world. The good spell, the good news, is as wide as the universe. I tell it to every creature under heaven, because I am told to do so. The secret of God, which is to deal with the application, that is restricted to God’s chosen ones, but not the message, for that is to be proclaimed to all nations. Now thou hast heard the gospel many and many a time in thy life. It runs thus: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Dost thou believe that? And this is thy hope—something like this: “I am a sinner. I trust Christ has died for me; I put my trust in the merit of his blood, and sink or swim, I have no other hope but this.

’Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling”

Thou hast heard it; hast thou received it in thy heart, and laid hold on it; then thou art one of those in the covenant. And why should election frighten thee? If thou hast chosen Christ, depend upon it he has chosen thee. If thy tearful eye is looking to him, then his omniscient eye has long

looked on thee; if thy heart lovest him, his heart loves thee better than ever thou canst love, and if now thou art saying, "My father, thou shalt be the guide of my youth," I will tell thee a secret—he has been thy guide, and has brought thee to be what thou now art, a humble seeker, and he will be thy guide and bring thee safe at last. But art thou a proud, boastful, free-willer, saying, "I will repent and believe whenever I choose; I have as good a right to be saved as anybody, for I do my duty as well as others, and I shall doubtless get my reward"—if you are claiming a universal atonement, which is to be received at the option of man's will, go and claim it, and you will be disappointed in your claim. You will find God will not deal with you on that ground at all, but will say, "Get thee hence, I never knew thee. He that cometh not to me through the Son cometh not at all." I believe the man who is not willing to submit to the electing love and sovereign grace of God, has great reason to question whether he is a Christian at all, for the spirit that kicks against that is the spirit of the devil, and the spirit of the unhumiliated, unrenewed heart. May God take away the enmity out of your heart to his own precious truth, and reconcile you to himself through THE BLOOD of his Son, which is the bond and seal of the everlasting covenant.

Grieving the Holy Spirit

A Sermon

(No. 278)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 9th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”—Ephesians 4:30.

THERE IS SOMETHING very touching in this admonition, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” It does not say, “Do not make him angry.” A more delicate and tender term is used—“Grieve him not.” There are some men of so hard a character, that to make another angry does not give them much pain; and indeed, there are many of us who are scarcely to be moved by the information that another is angry with us; but where is the heart so hard, that it is not moved when we know that we have caused others grief?—for grief is a sweet combination of anger and of love. It is anger, but all the gall is taken from it. Love sweetens the anger, and turns the edge of it, not against the person, but against the offense. We all know how we use the two terms in contra-distinction the one to the other. When I commit any offense, some friend who hath but little patience, suddenly snaps asunder his forbearance and is angry with me. The same offense is observed by a loving father, and he is grieved. There is anger in his bosom, but he is angry and he sins not, for he is angry against my sin; and yet there is love to neutralize and modify the anger towards me. Instead of wishing me ill as the punishment of my sin, he looks upon my sin itself as being the ill. He grieves to think that I am already injured, from the fact that I have sinned. I say this is a heavenly compound, more precious than all the ointment of the merchants. There may be the bitterness of myrrh, but there is all the sweetness of frankincense in this sweet term “to grieve.” I am certain, my hearers, I do not flatter you when I declare, that I am sure that the most of you would grieve, if you thought you were grieving anyone else. You, perhaps, would not care much if you had made any one angry without a cause; but to grieve him, even though it were without a cause and without intention, would nevertheless cause you distress of heart, and you would not rest until this grief had subsided, till you had made some explanation or apology, and had done your best to allay the smart and take away the grief. When we see anger in another, we at once begin to feel hostility. Anger begets anger; but grief begets pity, and pity is next akin to love; and are love those whom we have caused to grieve. Now, is not this a very sweet expression—“Grieve not the Holy Spirit?” Of course, the language is to be understood as speaking after the manner of men. The Holy Spirit of God knoweth no passion or suffering, but nevertheless, his emotion is here described in human language as being that of grief. And is it not, I say a tender and touching thing, that the Holy Spirit should direct his servant Paul to say to us “Grieve not the Holy Spirit,” do not excite his loving anger, do not vex him, do not cause him to mourn? He is a dove; do not cause him to mourn, because you have treated him harshly and ungratefully. Now, the purport of my sermon, this morning, will be to exhort you not to grieve the Spirit; but I shall divide it thus:—first, I shall discourse *upon the love of the Spirit*; secondly, *upon the seal of the Spirit*; and then, thirdly, *upon the grieving of the Spirit*.

I. The few words I have to say UPON THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT will all be pressing forward to my great mark, stirring you up not to grieve the Spirit; for when we are persuaded that another loves us, we find at once a very potent reason why we should not grieve him. The love of the Spirit!—how shall I tell it forth? Surely it needs a songster to sing it, for love is only to be spoken of in words of song. The love of the Spirit!—let me tell you of his early love to us. He loved us without beginning. In the eternal covenant of grace, as I told you last Sabbath, he was one of the high contracting parties in the divine contract, whereby we are saved. All that can be said of the love of the Father, of the love of the Son, may be said of the love of the Spirit—it is eternal, it is infinite, it is sovereign, it is everlasting, it is a love which cannot be dissolved, which cannot be decreased, a love which cannot be removed from those who are the objects of it. Permit me, however, to refer you to his acts, rather than his attributes. Let me tell you of the love of the Spirit to you and to me. Oh how early was that love which he manifested towards us, even in our childhood! My brethren, we can well remember how the Spirit was wont to strive with us. We went astray from the womb speaking lies, but how early did the Spirit of God stir up our conscience, and solemnly correct us on account of our youthful sins. How frequently since then has the Spirit wooed us! How often under the ministry has he compelled our hearts to melt, and the tear has run down our cheeks, and he has sweetly whispered in our ear, “My son, give me thy heart; go to thy chamber, shut thy door about thee, confess thy sins, and seek a Saviour’s love and blood.” Oh,—but let us blush to tell it—how often have we done despite to him! When we were in a state of unregeneracy, how we were wont to resist him! We quenched the Spirit; he strove with us but we strove against him. But blessed be his dear name, and let him have everlasting songs for it, he would not let us go! We would not be saved, but he would save us. We sought to thrust ourselves into the fire, but he sought to pluck us from the burning. We would dash ourselves from the precipice, but he wrestled with us and held us fast; he would not let us destroy our souls. Oh, how we ill-treated him, how we did set at nought his counsel! How did we scorn and scoff him; how did we despise the ordinance which would lead us to Christ! How did we violate that holy cord which was gently drawing us to Jesus and his cross! I am sure, my brethren, at the recollections of the persevering struggles of the Spirit with you, you must be stirred up to love him. How often did he restrain you from sin, when you were about to plunge headlong into a course of vice! How often did he constrain you to good, when you would have neglected it! You, perhaps, would not have been in the way at all, and the Lord would not have met you, if it had not been for that sweet Spirit, who would not let you become a blasphemer, who would not suffer you to forsake the house of God, and would not permit you to become a regular attendant at the haunts of vice, but checked you, and held you in, as it were, with bit and bridle. Though you were like a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke, yet he would not let you have your way. Though you struggled against him, yet he would not throw the reins upon your necks, but he said, “I will have him, I will have him against his will; I will change his heart, I will not let him go till I have made him a trophy of my mighty power to save.” And then think my brethren of the love of the Spirit after that—

“Dost mind the time, the spot of land,
Where Jesus did thee meet?
Where he first took thee by the hand,
Thy bridegroom’s love—how sweet!”

Ah, then, in that blest hour, to memory dear, was it not the Holy Spirit who guided you to Jesus? Do you remember the love of the Spirit, when, after having quickened you, he took you aside, and

showed you Jesus on the tree? Who was it that opened our blind eye to see a dying Saviour? Who was it that opened your deaf ear to hear the voice of pardoning love? Who opened your clasped and palsied hand to receive the tokens of a Saviour's grace? Who was it that brake your hard heart and made a way for the Saviour to enter and dwell therein? Oh! it was that precious Spirit that self-same Spirit, to whom you had done so much despite, whom in the days of your flesh you had resisted! What a mercy it was that he did not say, "I will swear in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest, for they have vexed me, and I will take my everlasting flight from them;" or thus, "Ephraim is joined unto idols, I will let him alone!" And since that time, my brethren, how sweetly has the Spirit proved his love to you and to me. It is not only in his first strivings, and then his divine quickenings; but in all the sequel, how much have we owed to his instruction. We have been dull scholars with the word before us, plain and simple, so that he that reads may read, and he that reads may understand, yet how small a portion of his Word has our memory retained, how little progress have we made in the school of God's grace! We are but learners yet, unstable, weak, and apt to slide, but what a blessed instructor we have had! Has he not led us into many a truth, and taken of the things of Christ and applied them unto us? Oh! When I think how stupid I have been, I wonder that he has not given me up. When I think what a dolt I have been, when he would have taught me the things of the kingdom of God, I marvel that he should have had such patience with me. Is it a wonder that Jesus should become a babe? Is it not an equal wonder that the Spirit of the living God, should become a teacher of babes? It is a marvel that Jesus should lie in a manger; is it not an equal marvel that the Holy Spirit should become an usher in the sacred school, to teach fools, and make them wise? It was condescension that brought the Saviour to the cross, but is it not equal condescension that brings the mighty Spirit of grace down to dwell with stubborn unruly, wild asses' colts, to teach them the mystery of the kingdom, and make them know the wonders of a Saviour's love?

Furthermore, my brethren, forget not how much we owe to the Spirit's consolation, how much has he manifested his love to you in cherishing you in all your sicknesses, assisting you in all your labors; and comforting you in all your distresses. He has been a blessed comforter to me I can testify; when every other comfort failed, when the promise itself seemed empty, when the ministry was void of power, it is then the Holy Spirit has proved a rich comfort unto my soul, and filled my poor heart with peace and joy in believing. How many times would your heart have broken if the Spirit had not bound it up! How often has he who is your teacher become also your physician, has closed the wounds of your poor bleeding spirit, and has bound up those wounds with the court plaister of the promise, and so has stanch'd the bleeding, and has given you back your spiritual health once more. It does seem to rise a marvel that the Holy Ghost should become a comforter, for comforting is, to many minds, but an inferior work in the church, though really it is not so. To teach, to preach, to command with authority, how many are willing to do this because this is honorable work; but to sit down and bear with the infirmities of the creature, to enter into all the stratagems of unbelief, to find the soul a way of peace in the midst of seas of trouble this is compassion like a God, that the Holy Spirit should stoop from heaven to become a comforter of disconsolate spirits. What! must he himself bring the cordial? must he wait upon his sick child and stand by his bed? must he make his bed for him in his afflictions must he carry him in his infirmity? must he breathe continually into him his very breath? Doth the Holy Spirit become a waiting servant of the church? Doth he become a lamp to enlighten? and doth he become a staff on which we may

lean? This, I say, should move us to love the Holy Spirit, for we have in all this abundant proofs of his love to us.

Stay not here, beloved, there are larger fields yet beyond, now that we are speaking of the love of the Spirit. Remember how much he loves us when he helpeth our infirmities. Nay, not only doth he help our infirmities, but when we know not what to pray for as we ought he teacheth us how to pray, and when “we ourselves groan within ourselves,” then the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered—groans as we should groan, but more audibly, so that our prayer, which else would have been silent, reaches the ears of Christ, and is then presented before his Father’s face. To *help* our infirmities is a mighty instance of love. When God overcomes infirmity altogether, or removes it, there is something very noble, and grand, and sublime in the deed; when he permits the infirmity to remain and yet works with the infirmity, this is tender compassion indeed. When the Saviour heals the lame man you see his Godhead, but when he walketh with the lame man, limping though his gait may be; when he sitteth with the beggar, when he talketh with the publican, when he carryeth the babe in his bosom, then this helping of infirmities is a manifestation of love almost unequalled. Save Christ’s bearing our infirmities upon the tree and our sins in his own body, I know of no greater or more tender instance of divine love than when it is written, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” Oh how much you owe to the Spirit when you have been on your knees in prayer! You know, my brethren, what it is to be dull and lifeless there; to groan for a word, and yet you cannot find it; to wish for a word, and yet the very wish is languid; to long to have desires, and yet all the desire you have is a desire that you may be able to desire. Oh, have you not sometimes, when your desires have been kindled longed to get a grip at the promise by the hand of faith? “Oh,” you have said, “if I could but plead the promise, all my necessities would be removed, and all my sorrows would be allayed;” but, alas, the promise was beyond your reach. If you touched it with the tip of your finger, you could not grasp it as you desired, you could not plead it, and therefore you came away without the blessing. But when the Spirit has helped our infirmities how have we prayed! Why, there have been times when you and I have so grasped the knocker of the gate of mercy, and have let it fall with such tremendous force, that it seemed as if the very gate itself did shake and totter; there have been seasons when we have laid hold upon the angel, have overcome heaven by prayer, have declared we would not let Jehovah himself go except he should bless us. We have, and we say it without blasphemy, moved the arm that moves the world. We have brought down upon us the eyes that look upon the universe. All this we have done, not by our own strength, but by the might and by the power of the Spirit, and seeing he has so sweetly enabled us, though we have so often forgotten to thank him; seeing that he has so graciously assisted us though we have often taken all the glory to ourselves instead of airing it to him, must we not admire his love, and must it not be a fearful sin indeed to grieve the Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed?

Another token of the Spirit’s love remains, namely, his indwelling in the saints. We sing in one of our hymns,—

“Dost thou not dwell in all the saints?”

We ask a question which can have but one answer. He does dwell in the heart of all God’s redeemed and blood-washed people. And what a condescension is this, that he whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, dwells in thy breast my brother. That breast often covered with rags, may be a breast often agitated with anxious care and thought, a breast too often defiled with sin, and yet he dwells there. The little narrow heart of man the Holy Spirit hath made his palace. Though

it is but a cottage, a very hovel, and all unholy and unclean yet doth the Holy Spirit condescend to make the heart of his people his continual abode. Oh my friends, when I think how often you and I have let the devil in, I wonder the Spirit has not withdrawn from us. The final perseverance of the saints, is one of the greatest miracles on record; in fact, it is the sum total of miracles. The perseverance of a saint for a single day, is a multitude of miracles of mercy. When you consider that the Spirit is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and yet he dwells in the heart where sin often intrudes, a heart out of which comes blasphemies, and murders, and all manner of evil thoughts and concupiscence, what if sometimes he is grieved, and retires and leaves us to ourselves for a season? It is a marvel that he is there at all, for he must be daily grieved with these evil guests, these false traitors, these base intruders who thrust themselves into that little temple which he has honored with his presence, the temple of the heart of man. I am afraid, dear friends, we are too much in the habit of talking of the love of Jesus, without thinking of the love of the Holy Spirit. Now I would not wish to exalt one person of the Trinity above another, but I do feel this, that because Jesus Christ was a man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and therefore there was something tangible in him that can be seen with the eyes, and handled with the hands, therefore we more readily think of him, and fix our love on him, than we do upon the Spirit. But why should it be? Let us love Jesus with all our hearts, and let us love the Holy Spirit too. Let us have songs for him, gratitude for him. We do not forget Christ's cross, let us not forget the Spirit's operations. We do not forget what Jesus has done for us, let us always remember what the Spirit does in us. Why you talk of the love, and grace, and tenderness, and faithfulness of Christ, why do you not say the like of the Spirit? Was ever love like his, that he should visit us? Was ever mercy like his, that he should bear with our ill manners, though constantly repeated by us? Was ever faithfulness like his, that multitudes of sins cannot drive him away? Was ever power like his, that overcometh all our iniquities, and yet leads us safely on, though hosts of foes within and without would rob us of our Christian life?

“Oh, the love of the Spirit I sing
By whom is redemption applied.”
And unto his name be glory for ever and ever.

II. This brings me to the second point. Here we have another reason why *we should not grieve the Spirit*. IT IS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WE ARE SEALED. “BY whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption.” I shall be very brief here. The Spirit himself is expressed as the seal, even as he himself is directly said to be the pledge of our inheritance. The sealing, I think, has a three-fold meaning. It is a sealing of *attestation* or confirmation. I want to know whether I am truly a child of God. The Spirit itself also beareth witness with my spirit that I am born of God. I have the writings, the title-deeds of the inheritance that is to come—I want to know whether those are valid, whether they are true, or whether they are mere counterfeits written out by that old scribe of hell, Master Presumption and Carnal Security. How am I to know? I look for the seal. After that we have believed on the Son of God, the Father seals us as his children, by the gift of the Holy Ghost. “Now he which hath anointed us is God, who also hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” No faith is genuine which does not bear the seal of the Spirit. No love, no hope can ever save us, except it be sealed with the Spirit of God, for whatever hath not his seal upon it is spurious. Faith that is unsealed may be a poison, it may be presumption; but faith that is sealed by the Spirit is true, real, genuine faith. Never be content, my dear hearers, unless you are sealed, unless you are sure, by the inward witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost, that you have been

begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is possible for a man to know infallibly that he is secure of heaven. He may not only hope so, but he may know it beyond a doubt, and he may know it thus,—by being able with the eye of faith to see the seal, the broad stamp of the Holy Spirit set upon his own character and experience. It is a seal of attestation.

In the next place, it is a sealing of *appropriation*. When men put their mark upon an article, it is to show that it is their own. The farmer brands his tools that they may not be stolen. They are his. The shepherd marks his sheep that they may be recognized as belonging to his flock. The king himself puts his broad arrow upon everything that is his property. So the Holy Spirit puts the broad arm of God upon the hearts of all his people. He seals us. “Thou shalt be mine,” saith the Lord, “in the day when I make up my jewels.” And then the Spirit puts God’s seal upon us to signify that we are God’s reserved inheritance—his peculiar people, the portion in which his soul delighteth.

But, again, by sealing is meant *preservation*. Men seal up that which they wish to have preserved, and when a document is sealed it becomes valid henceforth. Now, it is by the Spirit of God that the Christian is sealed, that he is kept, he is preserved, sealed unto the day of redemption—sealed until Christ comes fully to redeem the bodies of his saints by raising them from the death, and fully to redeem the world by purging it from sin, and making it a kingdom unto himself in righteousness. We shall hold on our way, we shall be saved. The chosen seed cannot be lost they must be brought home at last, but how? By the sealing of the Spirit. Apart from that they perish, they are undone. When the last general fire shall blaze out, everything that has not the seal of the Spirit on it, shall be burned up. But the men upon whose forehead is the seal shall be preserved. They shall be safe “amid the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds.” Their spirits, mounting above the flames shall dwell with Christ eternally, and with that same seal in their forehead upon Mount Zion, they shall sing the everlasting song of gratitude and praise. I say this is the second reason why we should love the Spirit and why we should not grieve him.

III. I come now to the third part of my discourse, namely, THE GRIEVING OF THE SPIRIT, How may we grieve him,—what will be the sad result of grieving him—if we have grieved him, how may we bring him back again? *How may we grieve the Spirit?* I am now, mark you, speaking of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God is in your hearts, and it is very, very easy indeed to grieve him, Sin is as easy as it is wicked. You may grieve him by impure thoughts. He cannot bear sin. If you indulge in lascivious expressions, or if even you allow imagination to coat upon any lascivious act, or if your heart goes after covetousness, if you set your heart upon anything that is evil, the Spirit of God will be grieved, for thus I hear him speaking of himself. “I love this man, I want to have his heart, and yet he is entertaining these filthy lusts. His thoughts, instead of running after me, and after Christ, and after the Father, are running after the temptations that are in the world through lust.” And then his Spirit is grieved. He sorrows in his soul because he knows what sorrow these things must bring to our souls. We grieve him yet more if we indulge in outward acts of sin. Then is he sometimes so grieved that he takes his flight for a season, for the dove will not dwell in our hearts if we take loathsome carrion in there. A cleanly being is the dove, and we must not strew the place which the dove frequents with filth and mire, if we do he will fly elsewhere. If we commit sin if we openly bring disgrace upon our religion, if we tempt others to go into iniquity by our evil example, it is not long before the Holy Spirit will begin to grieve. Again, if we neglect prayer, if our closet door is cob-webbed, if we forget to read the Scriptures, if the leaves of our Bible are almost stuck together by neglect, if we never seek to do any good in the world, if we live

merely for ourselves and not to Christ, then the Holy Spirit will be grieved, for thus he saith, "They have forsaken me, they have left the fountain of waters, they have hewn unto themselves broken cisterns." I think I now see the Spirit of God grieving, when you are sitting down to read a novel and there is your Bible unread. Perhaps you take down some book of travels, and you forget that you have got a more precious book of travels in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the story of your blessed Lord and Master. You have no time for prayer, but the Spirit sees you very active about worldly things, and having many hours to spare for relaxation and amusement. And then he is grieved because he sees that you love worldly things better than you love him. His spirit is grieved within him; take care that he does not go away from you, for it will be a pitiful thing for you if he leaves you to yourself. Again, ingratitude tends to grieve him. Nothing cut a man to the heart more than after having done his utmost for another, he turns round and repays him with ingratitude or insult. If we do not want to be thanked, at least we do love to know that there is thankfulness in the heart upon which we have conferred a boon, and when the Holy Spirit looks into our soul and sees little love to Christ, no gratitude to him for all he has done for us, then is he grieved.

Again, the Holy Spirit is exceedingly grieved by our unbelief. When we distrust the promise he hath given and applied, when we doubt the power or the affection of our blessed Lord. then the Spirit saith within himself—"They doubt my fidelity, they distrust my power, they say Jesus is not able to save unto the uttermost, thus again is the Spirit grieved. Oh, I wish the Spirit had an advocate here this morning, that could speak in better terms than I can. I have a theme that overmasters me, I seem to grieve for him; but I cannot make you grieve, nor tell out the grief I feel. In my own soul I keep saying, "Oh, this is just what you have done—you have grieved him." Let me make a full and frank confession even before you all. I know that too often, I as well as you have grieved the Holy Spirit. Much within us has made that sacred dove to mourn, and my marvel is, that he has not taken his flight from us and left us utterly to ourselves.

Now suppose the Holy Spirit is grieved, what is the effect produced upon us? When the Spirit is grieved first, he bears with us. He is grieved again and again, and again and again, and still he bears with it all. But at last, his grief becomes so excessive, that he says, "I will suspend my operations; I will begone; I will leave life behind me, but my own actual presence I will take away. And when the Spirit of God goes away from the soul and suspends all his operations what a miserable state we are in. He suspends his instructions; we read the word, we cannot understand it; we go to our commentaries, they cannot tell us the meaning; we fall on our knees and ask to be taught, but we get no answer, we learn nothing. He suspends his comfort; we used to dance, like David before the ark, and now we sit like Job in the ash-pit, and scrape our ulcers with a potsherd. There was a time when his candle shone round about us, but now he is gone; he has left us in the blackness of darkness. Now, he takes from us all spiritual power. Once we could do all things; now we can do nothing. We could slay the Philistines, and lay them heaps upon heaps, but now Delilah can deceive us, and our eyes are put out and we are made to grind in the mill. We go preaching, and there is no pleasure in preaching, and no good follows it. We go to our tract distributing, and our Sunday-school, we might almost as well be at home. There is the machinery there, but there is no love. There is the intention to do good, or perhaps not even that, but alas! there is no power to accomplish the intention. The Lord has withdrawn himself, his light, his joy, his comfort, his spiritual power, all are gone. And then all our graces flag. Our graces are much like the flower called the *Hydrangia*, when it has plenty of water it blooms, but as soon as moisture fails, the leaves drop down at once. And so when the Spirit goes away, faith shuts up its flowers; no perfume is exhaled. Then the fruit

of our love begins to rot and drops from the tree; then the sweet buds of our hope become frostbitten, and they die. Oh, what a sad thing it is to lose the Spirit. Have you never, my brethren, been on your knees and have been conscious that the Spirit of God was not with you, and what awful work it has been to groan, and cry, and sigh, and yet go away again, and no light to shine upon the promises, not so much as a ray of light through the chink of the dungeon. All forsaken, forgotten, and forlorn, you are almost driven to despair. You sing with Cowper:—

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
 How sweet their memory still!
 But they have left an aching void,
 The world can never fill.
 Return, thou sacred dove, return,
 Sweet messenger of rest,
 I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
 And drove thee from my breast.
 The dearest idol I have known,
 Whate'er that idol be,
 Help me to tear it from its throne,
 And worship only thee.”

Ah! sad enough it is to have the Spirit drawn from us. But, my brethren, I am about to say something with the utmost charity, which, perhaps, may look severe, but, nevertheless, I must say it. The churches of the present day are very much in the position of those who have grieved the Spirit of God; for the Spirit deals with churches just as it does with individuals. Of these late years how little has God wrought in the midst of his churches. Throughout England, at least some four or five years ago, an almost universal torpor had fallen upon the visible body of Christ. There was a little action, but it was spasmodic; there was no real vitality. Oh! how few sinners were brought to Christ, how empty had our places of worship become; our prayer-meetings were dwindling away to nothing, and our church meetings were mere matters of farce. You know right well that this is the case with many London churches to this day; and there be some that do not mourn about it. They go up to their accustomed place, and the minister prays, and the people either sleep with their eyes or else with their hearts, and they go out, and there is never a soul saved. The pool of baptism is seldom stirred; but the saddest part of all is this, the churches are willing to have it so. They are not earnest to get a revival of religion. We have been doing something, the church at large has been doing something. I will not just now put my finger upon what the sin is, but there has been something done which has driven the Spirit of God from us. He is grieved, and he is gone. He is present with us here, I thank his name, he is still visible in our midst. He has not left us. Though we have been as unworthy as others, yet has he given us a long outpouring of his presence. These five years or more, we have had a revival which is not to be exceeded by any revival upon the face of the earth. Without cries or shoutings, without fallings down or swooning, steadily God adds to this church numbers upon numbers, so that your minister's heart is ready to break with very joy when he thinks how manifestly the Spirit of God is with us. But brethren, we must not be content with this, we want to see the Spirit poured out on all churches. Look at the great gatherings that there were in St. Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, and Exeter Hall, and other places, how was it that no good was done, or so very little? I have watched with anxious eye, and I have never from that day forth heard but of one conversion, and that in St. James' Hall, from all these cervices. Strange it seems. The

blessing may have come in larger measure than we know, but not in so large a measure as we might have expected, if the Spirit of God had been present with all the ministers. Oh would that we may live to see greater things than we have ever seen yet. Go home to your houses, humble yourselves before God, ye members of Christ's church, and cry aloud that he will visit his church, and that he would open the windows of heaven and pour out his grace upon his thirsty hill of Zion, that nations may be born in a day, that sinners may be saved by thousands—that Zion may travail and may bring forth children. Oh! there are signs and tokens of a coming revival. We have heard but lately of a good work among the Ragged School boys of St. Giles's, and our soul has been glad on account of that; and the news from Ireland comes to us like good tidings, not from a far country, but from a sister province of the kingdom. Let us cry aloud to the Holy Spirit, who is certainly grieved with his church, and let us purge our churches of everything that is contrary to his Word and to sound doctrine, and then the Spirit will return, and his power shall be manifest.

And now, in conclusion, there may be some of you here who have lost the visible presence of Christ with you; who have in fact so grieved the Spirit that he has gone. It is a mercy for you to know that the Spirit of God never leaves his people finally; he leaves them for chastisement, but not for damnation. He sometimes leaves them that they may get good by knowing their own weakness, but he will not leave them finally to perish. Are you in a state of backsliding, declension, and coldness? Harken to me for a moment, and God bless the words. Brother, stay not a moment in a condition so perilous; be not easy for a single second in the absence of the Holy Ghost. I beseech you use every means by which that Spirit may be brought back to you. Once more, let me tell you distinctly what the means are. Search out for the sin that has grieved the Spirit, give it up, slay that sin upon the spot; repent with tears and sighs; continue in prayer, and never rest satisfied until the Holy Ghost comes back to you. Frequent an earnest ministry, get much with earnest saints, but above all, be much in prayer to God, and let your daily cry be, "Return, return, O Holy Spirit return, and dwell in my soul." Oh, I beseech you be not content till that prayer is heard, for you have become weak as water, and faint and empty while the Spirit has been away from you. Oh! it may be there are some here this morning with whom the Spirit has been striving during the past week. Oh yield to him, resist him not; grieve him not, but yield to him. Is he saying to you now "Turn to Christ?" Listen to him, obey him, he moves you. Oh I beseech you do not despise him. Have you resisted him many a time, then take care you do not again, for there may come a last time when the Spirit may say, "I will go unto my rest, I will not return unto him, the ground is accursed, it shall be given up to barrenness." Oh I hear the word of the gospel, ere ye separate, for the Spirit speaketh effectually to you now in this short sentence—"Repent and be converted everyone of you, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," and hear this solemn sentence, "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." May the Lord grant that we may not grieve the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come and Welcome

A Sermon

(No. 279)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 16th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And 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.”—Revelation 22:17.

THE CRY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION is the simple word, “Come.” The Jewish law said, “Go, and take heed unto thy steps as to the path in which thou shalt walk. Go, and break the commandments, and thou shalt perish; Go, and keep them, and thou shalt live.” The law was a dispensation of the whip, which drove men before it; the gospel is just of the opposite kind. It is the Shepherds dispensation. He goeth before his sheep, and he bids them follow him, saying unto them, “Come.” The law repels; the gospel attracts. The law shows the distance between God and man; the gospel bridges that distance, and brings the sinner across that great fixed gulf which Moses could never bridge. The fact is, as you will all have to learn, if you know anything of gracious experience, that from the first moment of your spiritual life until you are ushered into glory, the cry of Christ to you will be, “Come, come unto me.” He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow him as the soldier follows his leader. He will always go before you to pave your way, and to prepare your path, and he will bid you come after him all through life, and in the solemn hour of death, when you shall lie panting upon your bed, his sweet word with which he shall usher you into the heavenly world shall be—“Come, come unto me. Stretch thy wings and fly straight to this world of joy where I am dwelling. Come and be with me where I am.”

Nay, further than this, this is not only Christ’s cry to you; but if you be a believer, this is your cry to Christ—“Come! come!” You will be longing for his second advent; you will be saying, “Come quickly, even so come Lord Jesus.” And you will be always panting for nearer and closer communion with him. As his voice to you is “Come,” even so will be your prayer to him, “Come, Lord, and abide in my house. Come, and consecrate me more fully to thy service; come, and without a rival reign; come, occupy alone the throne of my heart.”

“Come,” then, is the very motto-word of the gospel. I hope to expand that word, this morning, to beat out the golden grain into goldleaf, and may God the Holy Spirit speak this day with his minister, and may some who have never come to Jesus before, now come to him for the first time.

Let us go at once to our text—“Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Now, there are four things very plain from our text, namely, that first, *there is a “water of life;”* that secondly, *the invitation is very wide—“Whosoever will;”* that thirdly, *the path is clear,* for it says, “Whoever will, let him come;” and then again, that, fourthly, *the only rule that is prescribed is—let him take it “freely.”* That is the only price demanded, and the only condition, which indeed is not a condition, but a death-blow to all conditions. “Let him come and take the water of life freely.”

I. First, then, remember I am about to preach a very simple sermon this morning, dealing with simple souls. I am longing to see sinners brought to Christ, my heart yearns after the multitude of men who see no beauty in him that they should desire him. God has saved many in this place; may

he be pleased this morning to bring some wanderer to the Father's house, through the merit of the Son's cross by the Spirit's influence. Well, then, THERE IS A "WATER OF LIFE." Man is utterly ruined and undone. He is lost in a wild waste wilderness. The skin bottle of his righteousness is all dried up, and there is not so much as a drop of water in it. The heavens refuse him rain, and the earth can yield him no moisture. Must he perish? He looks aloft, beneath, around, and he discovers no means of escape. Must he die? Must thirst devour him? Must he fall upon the desert and leave his bones to bleach under the hot sun? No; for the text declares there is a fountain of life. Ordained in old eternity by God in solemn covenant, this fountain, this divine well, takes its spring from the deep foundations of God's decrees. It gusheth up from the depth which coucheth beneath, it cometh from that place which the eagle's eye hath not seen, and which the lion's whelp hath not passed over. The deep foundations of Godly government, the depth, of his own essential goodness and of his divine nature—these are the mysterious springs from which gush forth that fountain of the "water of life" which shall do good a to man. The Son hath digged this well and bored through massive rocks which prevented this living water from springing upward. Using his cross as the grand instrument he has pierced through rocks, he has himself descended to the lowest depth, and he hath broken a passage by which the love and grace of God, the living water which can save the soul, may well up and overflow to quench the thirst of dying men. The Son hath bidden this fountain freely flow, hath removed the stone which laid upon the mouth thereof, and now having ascended upon high he standeth there to see that the fountain shall never stay its life-giving course, that its floods shall never be dry, that its depths shall never be exhausted. This sacred fountain, established according to God's good will and pleasure in the covenant, opened by Christ when he died upon the cross, floweth this day to give life and health, and joy and peace to poor sinners dead in sin, and ruined by the fall. There is a "water of life."

Let us pause awhile and look at its floods as they come gushing upwards, overflowing on every side, and assuaging men's thirst. Let us look with joyous eye. It is called the "water of life," and richly doth it deserve its name. God's favor is life, and in his presence there is pleasure for evermore; but this water is God's favor, and consequently life. By this water of life is intended God's free grace, God's love for men, so, that if you come and drink, you shall find this to be life indeed to your soul, for in drinking of God's grace you inherit God's love, you are reconciled to God, God stands in a fatherly relation to you, he loves you, and his great infinite heart yearns towards you:

Again, it is living water not simply because it is love, and that is life, but it saves from impending death. The sinner knows that he must die because he is filthy. He has committed sins so tremendous that God must punish him. God must cease to be just if he does not punish the sins of man. Man when conscious that he has been very guilty, stands shivering in the presence of his Maker, feeling in his soul that his doom is signed, and sealed, and that he must certainly be cast away from all hope, and life, and joy. Come hither then ye sin-doomed; this water can wash away your sins, and when your sins are washed away, then shall ye live; for the innocent must not be punished. Here is water that can make you whiter than driven snow. What though you be black as Kedar's smoky tents, here is water that can purge you, and wash you to the whiteness of perfection, and make you fair as the curtains of king Solomon. These waters well deserve the name of life, since pardon is a condition of life. Unpardoned we die, we perish, we sink into the depths of hell; pardoned we live, we rise, we ascend to the very heights of heaven. See here, then, this ever-gushing fountain will give to all who take thereof life from the dead, by the pardon of their sins.

“But,” saith the poor convicted soul, “This is not all I want, for if all the sins I have ever committed were blotted out, in one ten minutes I should commit many more. If I were now completely pardoned, it would not be many seconds before I should destroy my soul and sink helplessly again.” Ay! but see here this is living water, it can quench thy thirst of sin; entering into thy soul it shall overcome and cover with its floods thy propensities to evil. It shall cover them first, it shall afterwards drown them, and at last, it shall utterly carry them away, sucking them into its whirlpool-depths where they shall never be found any more for ever. Oh sinners! this fountain of gospel grace can so wash your hearts that you shall no longer love sin, yea, so perfectly can this water refine the soul that it shall one day make you as spotless as the angels who stand before the throne of God, and you too, like them, shall obey the behests of God, hearkening to his commands, and rejoicing to be his servants. This is life indeed, for here is a favor, here is pardon, here is sanctity, the renewing of the soul by the washing of water, through the Word.

“But,” saith one, “I have a longing within me which I cannot satisfy. I feel sure that if I be pardoned yet there is something which I want—which nothing I have ever heard of, or have ever seen or handled can satisfy. I have within me an aching void which the world can never fill.” “There was a time,” says one, “when I was satisfied with the theater, when the amusements, the pleasures of men of the world, were very satisfactory to me. But lo! I have pressed this olive till it yields no more the generous oil; it is but the dreggy thick excrement thereof that now I can obtain. My joys have faded; the beauty of my fat valley hath become as a faded flower. No longer can I rejoice in the music of this world.” Ah! soul, glad am I that thy cistern has become dry, for till men are dissatisfied with this world they never look out for the next; till the God of this world has utterly deceived them they will not look to him who is the only living and true God. But hearken! thou that art wretched and miserable, here is living water that can quench thy thirst. Come hither and drink, and thou shalt be satisfied; for he that is a believer in Christ finds enough for him in Christ now, and enough for ever. The believer is not the man who has to pace his room, saying, “I find no amusements and no delight.” He is not the man whose days are weary, and whose nights are long, for he finds in religion such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation, that he is content and happy. Put him in a dungeon and he will find good company; place him in a barren wilderness, still he could eat the bread of heaven; drive him away from friendship, he will find the “friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Blast all his gourds, and he will find shadow beneath the rock of ages; sap the foundation of his earthly hopes, but since the foundation of his God standeth sure, his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord. There is each a fullness in religion, that I can honestly testify from experience,

“I would not change my best estate,
For all that earth calls good or great.”

I never knew what happiness was till I knew Christ; I thought I did. I warmed my hands before the fire of sin, but it was a painted fire. But oh, when once I tasted the Saviour’s love, and had been washed in Jesus’s blood, that was heaven begun below.

“‘Tis heaven on earth, and heaven above,
To see his face, to taste his love.”

Oh, if ye did but know the joys of religion, if ye did but know the sweetness of love to Christ, surely ye could not stand aloof. If ye could but catch a glimpse of the believer when he is dancing for joy, you would renounce your wildest mirth, your greatest joy, to become the meanest child in

the family of God. Thus then it is the living water, it is the water of life, because it satisfies our thirst, and gives us the reality of life which we can never find in anything beneath the sky.

And here let me add very briefly, he who once drinks of this water of life, drinks that which will quench his thirst for ever. You shall never thirst again, except it be that you shall long for deeper draughts of this living fountain.

In that sweet manner shalt thou thirst. It shalt not be a thirst of pain, it shall be a thirst of loving joy—a happy thirst, you will find it a sweet thing to be thirsting after more of Christ's love. Become a Christian, and thou shalt be satisfied for life, thou shalt then be able to say,—“Return unto thy rest, O my son, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee.” Thou shalt find an ever-living tree upon which thou shalt build thy nest, and no axe shall ever fell it, no winds shall ever shake thy quiet resting-place, but thou shalt rest for ever on the dear bosom of the Saviour where thou shalt find eternal rest, eternal joy and peace. Oh, come and take of him, and drink of the water of life freely.

And, moreover, he who drinketh of this living water shall never die. His body shall see corruption for a little while, but his soul mounting aloft, shall dwell with Jesus. Yea! and his very body when it has passed through the purifying process, shall again more glorious than when it was sown in weakness. It shall rise in glory, in honor, in power, in majesty, and united with the soul, it shall everlastingly inherit the joys which Christ has prepared for them that love him. This is the living water; I see the fountain flowing now, freely flowing, sparkling with all these excellent properties. Who would not long to come and drink thereof?

II. In the second place we observe from the text that the invitation is very wide—“WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.” How wide is this invitation! There are some ministers who are afraid to invite sinners, then why are they ministers! for they are afraid to perform the most important part of the sacred office. There was a time I must confess when I somewhat faltered when about to give a free invitation. My doctrinal sentiments did at thee time somewhat hamper me. I boldly avow that I am unchanged as to the doctrines I have preached; I preach Calvinism as high, as stern, and as sound as ever; but I do feel, and always did feel an anxiety to invite sinners to Christ. And I do feel also, that not only is such a course consistent with the soundest doctrines, but that the other course is after all the unsound one, and has no title whatever to plead Scripture on its behalf. There has grown up in many Baptist churches an idea that none are to be called to Christ but what they call *sensible* sinners. I sometimes rebut that by remarking, that I call *stupid* sinners to Christ as well as sensible sinners, and that stupid sinners make by far the greatest proportion of the ungodly. But I glory in the avowal that I preach Christ even to *insensible* sinners—that I would say even to the dry bones of the valley, as Ezekiel did, “Ye dry bones live!” doing it as an act of faith; not faith in the power of those that hear to obey the command, but faith in the power of God who gives the command to give strength also to those addressed, that they may be constrained to obey it. But now listen to my text; for here, at least, there is no limitation. But sensible or insensible, all that the text saith is, “Whosoever *will*, let him come and take the water of life freely.”

The one question I have to ask this morning is, art thou willing? if so, Christ bids thee take the water of life. Art thou willing? if so, be pardoned, be sanctified be made whole. For if thou art willing Christ is willing too, and thou art freely invited to come and welcome to the fountain of life and grace.

Now mark, the question has to do with the *will*. “Oh,” says one, “I am so foolish I cannot understand the plan of salvation, therefore I may not come and drink.” But my question has nothing to do with your understanding, it has to do with your will. You may be as big a fool as you will, but if you are willing to come to Christ you are freely invited. If you could not read a single letter in the alphabet, or spell out a word in the book, yet may your lips—ignorant lips though they be—now drink of this water of life. It has nothing to do with your understanding; it does not say “Whosoever *understandeth* let him come,” but “whosoever *will*,” and I do not doubt but what there are many souls who when they first come to Christ have very little understanding of the way of salvation, and very little knowledge of the way in which he saves; but they come to Christ, the Holy Ghost makes them willing to come, and so they are saved. Oh ye who have been for many a year wearing the pauper’s garb, ye who come here from the workhouse, ye that are ignorant, ye that are despised among men—are you willing to be saved? Can you say from your heart, “Lord, thou knowest I would have my sins forgiven?” Then come and welcome. Jesus bids thee come. Let not thine ignorance keep thee away. He appeals, not to thine understanding, but to thy will.

“Oh,” says one, “I can understand the plan of salvation, but I cannot repent as I would. Sir, *my heart* is so hard, I cannot bring the tear to my eye, I cannot feel my sins as I would desire.

“My heart how dreadful hard it is,
How heavy here it lies;
Heavy and cold within my breast,
Just like a rock of ice.”

Ay, but this text has nothing to do with your heart; it is with your *will*. Are you willing? Then be your heart hard as the nether millstone if thou art willing to be saved I am bidden to invite thee. “Whosoever *will*,” not “whosoever feels,” but “whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” “Yes,” says one, “I can honestly say I am willing, but my heart will not soften. I wish that grace would change me. I can say I wish that Christ would soften my heart. I do desire that he would put the living fire within my cold breast and make me repent, and make me love him, and make me believe in him. I am *willing*.” Well, then, the text is for thee, “Whosoever *will*, let him come.” If thou art willing thou art freely invited to Christ. “No,” saith one, “but I am such a great sinner. I have been a drunkard; I have been a lascivious man; I have gone far astray from the paths of rectitude. I would not have all my sins known to my fellow creatures. How can God accept of such a wretch as I am, such a foul creature as I have been?” Mark thee, man! There is no reference made here to thy past life. It simply says, “whosoever will,” Art thou willing? Art thou willing to be saved? Canst thou say, “Now, Lord, I am willing to be saved, give me a new heart; I am willing to give up my sins; I am willing to be a Christian; I am willing to believe and willing to obey, but oh for this no strength have I, Lord, I have the will; give me the power.” Then thou art freely invited to come, if thou art but willing. There is no barrier between thee and Christ except thy stubborn will. If thy will is subdued, and if thou art saying “Yes, Lord, I am willing,” then art thou freely invited. Oh, reject not the invitation, but, come and welcome, sinner come.”

But saith one, “I *cannot* come, I cannot believe; I cannot do as I would.” Well, but it does not say, “Whosoever *can*, let him come,” but “whosoever *will*, let him come.” Art thou willing? You know there is many a man that has more will than power, but God estimates us not by our power, but by our will. You see a man on horseback, he is in haste to fetch a doctor for some dying man: the horse is a miserable jade, and will not go as rapidly as the man would like, but you cannot scold him because you see him whipping and spurring, and thus proving that he would go if he could,

and so the master takes the man's will for the deed. So is it with you, your poor heart will not go, it is a sorry, disabled jade, but it would go if it could. So Jesus invites you, not according to what you can, but according to what you will. "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." All the stipulation is—Art thou willing—truly willing? If so, thou art freely welcome. Thou art earnestly invited to take of the water of life, and that freely too.

Surely as this goes round the hall, there will be many found who did answer to it, and who will say, from all their hearts, "I am willing: I am willing." Come let the question go personally round. Let me not talk to you in the mass, but let the arrow reach the individual. Grey head, give thy reply, and let you fair-haired boy answer also. Are you willing now to be saved—are you willing to forsake sin—willing to take Christ to be your master from this day forth and for ever? Are you willing to be washed in his blood? Willing to be clothed in his righteousness? Are you willing to be made happy—willing to escape from hell, and willing to enter? Strange that it should be necessary to ask such questions, but still it is. Are you willing? Then remember that whatever may be against you—whatever may have defiled you—however black, however filthy, however worthless you may be, you are invited this day to take of the fountain of the water of life freely, for you are willing, and it is said, "Whosoever *will*, let him come."

"Ah!" saith one, "God knows I am willing, but still I do not think I am worthy." No, I know you are not, but what is that to do with it? It is not "whosoever is *worthy*," but "whosoever *will*, let him come." "Well," says one, "I believe that whosoever will may come, but not me, for I am the vilest sinner out of hell." But mark thee, sinner, it says, "*whosoever*." What a big word that is! Whosoever! There is no standard height here. It is of any height and any size. Little sinners, big sinners, black sinners, fair sinners, sinners double dyed, old sinners, aggravated sinners, sinners who have committed every crime in the whole catalogue,—*whosoever*. Doth this exempt one? Who can be excluded from this whosoever? It mattereth not who thou mayest be, nor what thou mayest have been, if thou art willing to be saved; free as the air thou breathest is the love and grace of God. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Thus have I tried to show you how broad the invitation is.

III. And now I am about to show you, in the third place, how clear the path is. "WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." That word "let" is a very curious word, because it signifies two opposite things. "Let" is an old-fashioned word which sometimes signifies "hinder." "He that letteth shall be taken away,"—that is, "He that hindereth." But here, in our text, it means the removing of all hindrance. "*Let him come*:"—Methinks I hear Jehovah speaking this. Here is the fountain of love and mercy. But you are too unworthy, you are too vile. Hear Jehovah! He cries, "*Let him come*, he is willing. Stand back! doubts and fears, away with you, let him come; make a straight road; let him come if he be but willing." Then the devil himself comes forward and striding across the way, he says to the poor trembling soul, "I will spill thy blood; thou shalt never have mercy. I defy thee; though shalt never believe in Christ, and never be saved." But Christ says, "*Let him come*;" and Satan, strong though he be, quails beneath Jehovah's voice, and Jesus drives him away, and the path stands clear this morning, nor can sin, nor death, nor hell, block up the way, when Jehovah Jesus says, "*Let him come*."

Methinks I see several ministers standing in the way. They are of such high doctrine that they dare not invite a sinner, and they therefore clog the gospel with so many conditions. They will have it that the sinner must feel a certain quantity of experience before he is invited to come, and so they put their sermons up and say, "You are not invited, you are a dead sinner, you must not come; you

are not invited; you are a hardened rebel.” “Stand back,” says Christ, “every one of you, though ye be my servants. *Let him come*, he is willing—stand not in his way.” It is a sad thing that Christ’s ministers should become the devil’s aiders and abettors, and yet sometimes they are, for when they are telling a sinner how much he must feel, and how much he must know before he comes to Christ, they are virtually rolling big stones in the path, and saying to the willing sinner, “Thou mayest not come.” In the name of Almighty God, stand back everything this morning that keeps the willing sinner from Christ. Away with you, away with you! Christ sprinkles his blood upon the way, and cries to you, “Vanish, begone! leave the road clear; *let him come*; stand not in his path; make straight before him his way, level the mountains and fill up the valleys; make straight through the wilderness a highway for him to come, to drink of this water of life freely. *’Let him come.’*” Oh, is not that a precious word of command! for it has all the might of Omnipotence in it. God said, “Let there be light and there was light,” and he says, “Let him come” and come he will and must, that is but willing to come. “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” And now, sinner, remember God says, “*come.*” Is there anything in thy way? Remember, he adds, “*Let him come.*” He bids everything stand out of thy way. Standing one day in the court-house, some witness was required, I forget his name, it may have been Brown, for instance, in one moment the name was announced, “Brown, Samuel Brown,” by-and-bye twenty others take up the cry, “Samuel Brown, Samuel Brown.” There was seen a man pushing his way through, “Make room,” said he, “make room, his honor calls me,” and though there were many in his path, they gave way, because his being called was a sufficient command to them, not to hinder him, but to let him come. And now, soul, if thou be a willing sinner, though thy name it not mentioned—if thou be a willing sinner, thou art as truly called as though thou wert called by name, and therefore, push through thy fears. Make elbow room, and come; they that would stop thee are craven cowards. *He* has said “Let him come,” and they cannot keep you back; Jehovah has said, “Let him come,” and it is yours now to say, “I will come. “There is nothing that shall hinder me, I will push through every thing, and

’I will to the gracious King,
Whose scepter mercy gives,’

I will go to the fountain and take of the water of life freely.”

IV. And now this brings me to the last head, the condition which is the death of all conditions—LET US TAKE IT FREELY. Methinks I see one here who is saying “I would be saved and I will do what I can to be worthy of it.” The fountain is free, and he comes with his halfpenny in his hand, and that a bad one, and he says, “Here, sir, give me a cup of this living water to drink; I am well worthy of it for see the price is in my band.” Why, man, if thou could’st bring the wealth of Potosi, or all the diamonds of Galconda, and all the pearls of Ormuz, you could not buy this most costly thing. Put up your money, you could not have it for gold or silver. The man brings his merit, but heaven is not to be sold to meritmongers. Or perhaps you say “I will go to church regularly, I will give to the poor, I will attend my meeting-house, I will take a sitting, I will be baptized, I will do this and the other, and then no doubt I shall have the water of life.” Back, miserable herd, bring not your rags and rubbish to God, he wants them not. Stand back, you insult the Almighty when you tender anything as payment. Back with ye; he invites not such as you to come. He says come freely. He wants nothing to recommend you. He needs no recommendation. You want no good works. Do not bring any. But you have no good feelings. Nevertheless you are willing, therefore come. He wants no good feelings of you. You have no belief and no repentance, yet nevertheless you are willing.

“True belief and true repentance,
 Every grace that brings us nigh,
 Without money,
 Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”

Do not try to get them yourself—come to him, and he will give them to you. Come just as you are; it is “freely,” “without money and without price.” The drinking fountains at the corners of our streets are valuable institutions; but I cannot imagine anyone being so foolish, as when he comes to the drinking fountains fumbling for his purse, and saying, “I cannot drink because I have not five pounds in my pocket.” Why, however poor the man is, there is the fountain, and poor as he is he may drink of it. It is put there for the public. Thirsty souls as they go by, whether they are dressed in fustian or in broad cloth, don’t look for any warrant for drinking; they come and drink of it freely. Here it is; the liberality of some good friend has put it there, and they take it and ask no questions whatever. Perhaps the only persons that ever need to go thirsty through the street where there is a drinking fountain, are the fine ladies and gentlemen who are in their carriages. They are very thirsty, and cannot think of being so vulgar as to get out to drink. It would bemean them, they think, to drink at a common drinking fountain, so they go with parched lips. Oh, how many there are that are rich, rich in their own good works, that cannot come to Christ. “I will not be saved,” they say, “in the same way as a harlot or a swearer. What I go to heaven the same way as a chimney sweep! Is there no pathway to glory, but the path which a Magdalene may take? I will not be saved that way.” Then you fine gentry may remain without. You are not bidden to come, for you are not willing. But remember,

“None are excluded hence,
 But those who do themselves exclude;
 Welcome the learned and polite,
 The ignorant and rude.”

“Whosoever wills let him come.” Let him bring nothing to recommend him. Let him not imagine he can give any payment to God or any ransom for his soul; for the one condition that excludes all conditions is, “Let him come and take the water of life freely.” There is a man of God here, who has drank of the river of the water of life many times; but he says, “I want to know more of Christ, I want to have nearer fellowship with him; I want to enter more closely into the mystery of his sacrifice; I want to understand more and more of the fellowship of his sufferings, and to be made conformable unto his death.” Well, believer, drink freely. You have filled your bowl of faith once, and you drank the draught off, fill it again, drink again, and keep on drinking. Put your mouth to the fountain if you will, drink right on. As good Rutherford says in one of his letters, “I have been sinking my bucket down into the well full often, but now my thirst after Christ has become so insatiable, that I long to put the well itself to my lips, and drain it all, and drink right on.” Well take it freely as much as ever you can. You have come now into the field of Boaz, you may pick up every ear that you can find, nay more than that, you may carry away the sheaves if you like, and more than that, you may claim the whole field to be yours if you will. The eating and drinking at Christ’s table is like that of Ahasuerus, only in an opposite way. It is said of that table, none did compel; it is said of this, none doth withhold: none can restrain. If there be a big vessel full of this holy water, drink it all up, and if there be one that holdeth twelve firkins, drink it, yea, drink it all, and thou shalt find that even then there is as much as ever. In Christ there is enough for all, enough for each enough for evermore; and none shall ever have need to say that there was not enough in

Christ for him. Drink freely. So you see that there are two meanings—drink without price, and drink without stint.

Then, again, we have an old proverb that there are certain guests who come to our houses who are more free than they are welcome. They make free themselves, and go further than we can bid them welcome. But with regard to those who come to the fountain of living waters, you may make as free as you will and you are welcome; make as free as you can, take this water as you will, Christ will not grudge you. He that stands by the fountain will never mourn because you drink too much; he will never be dissatisfied because such a black fellow as you has dared to wash himself in the living stream. No, but the blacker you are the more will he rejoice that you have been washed; the more thirsty you are the more will his soul be gladdened to have you drink even to the full and be satisfied. He is not enriched by withholding; rather he is enriched in joy by giving. It is as much a pleasure to Christ to save you as it will be to you to be saved. He is just as glad to see the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind sit at his table as ever they can be to sit there. He is just as pleased to carry men to heaven as they themselves can be when they drink of the river of joy at the fountain-head of eternity, “Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.”

And now I do not know what to say further. My text is such a precious one that I cannot enter into the fullness of its freeness and sweetness. Remember, my dear friends, if you are willing to be saved, God requires nothing of you except that you will yield yourselves up to Christ. If you are willing to be saved none can prevent; there is no obstacle. You are not going like the daughters of Hobab to a well from which you will be driven by the coarseness and rudeness of shepherds. You are come where Jesus stands—stands with open arms, stands with open mouth, crying to you this day, “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.”

And now will you refuse the invitation? See that you refuse not him that speaketh! Will you go this day and abuse the free mercy of God? Shall this very mercy lead you into more sin? Will you be wicked enough to say, that because grace is free, therefore you will continue in sin year after year?

Oh do not so; grieve not the Spirit of God; to-day is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation. If ye turn not he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. You have been warned, your conscience has often pricked you, now this day you are sweetly invited. But the time of warnings and invitations will not last for ever: they will soon be over, and when your funeral knell is tolling, you shall be in that lake of fire, that land of misery and pain, where not a drop of water shall ever cool your burning tongue. As you would escape from the flames of hell, as you would be delivered from the eternal torments which God will certainly hurl upon you like hailstones, I beseech thee now consider thy ways, and if now thou art willing thou art invited and none can keep thee back from his mercy. “Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.” Shall I preach in vain? Will you all go away and not take the water of life? Come, soul—is there not one at least that God shall give me this day for my hire—not one? May I not take one of you by the hand, some poor sinning erring brother? Come, brother let us go together and drink. O may the Holy Ghost incline you. Take it my brother. See on that bloody tree Jesus hangs; behold he pays his life a ransom for your sins and mine. Believe on him, trust him, commit your soul to him and be saved. Will you not say in your soul

“Just as I am without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me

And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O lamb of God I come, I come?"

And as my Master is true and faithful, he cannot cast away one soul that cometh, for "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." O Spirit, now draw reluctant hearts, and now give timid souls courage to believe for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The Chaff Driven Away

A Sermon

(No. 280)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 23rd, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.”—Psalm 1:4.

AND WHO are the ungodly? Are they open and wilful sinners—men who take God’s name in vain, and curse, and blaspheme—men who break the laws of man, the laws of the state—men who are scarcely to be trusted with liberty? Certainly these are included, but these are not mainly intended. While such men come under the category of “sinners” and “scorners,” there is another class expressly aimed at by the term “ungodly.” And who are the ungodly? Are they the men who deny God’s existence, who neglect the outward forms of religion, who scoff at everything that is sacred, and make a ribald jest of things at which angels tremble? These are included, most certainly, but neither are these the men specially aimed at. They are the scornful, the pestilent: these are the men whose iniquities have gone beforehand to judgment against them, and whose sins are clampering before the throne for justice. Another class of men is intended under the term “ungodly.” And who are they? Surely, my brethren, the answer may well strike you with awe. I do trust there are not many in this hall who may be called scorners; and, perhaps, not very many who would come under the denomination of open profligates and rebels; but how large a proportion of all those who attend our places of worship may justly be ranked under the character of the ungodly! What does this exactly mean? Let me just show its differences once again, and then more precisely define it.

We sometimes call men irreligious; and, surely, to be irreligious is bad enough; but to be religious is not good enough. A man may be religious, but yet he may not be godly. There are many who are religious; as touching the law outwardly they are blameless; Hebrews of the Hebrews, Pharisees of the strictest sect. They neglect no rubric, they break no law of their church, they are exceedingly precise in their religion; yet, notwithstanding this, they may rank under the class of the ungodly; for to be religious is one thing, and to be godly is quite another. To be godly, then,—to come at once to the mark—to be godly is to have a constant eye to God, to recognize him in all things’ to trust him, to love him, to serve him. And the ungodly man is one who does not have an eye to God in his daily business, who lives in this world as if there were no God; while he attends to all the outward ceremonies of religion, he never goes to their core, never enters into their secret heart and their deep mysteries. He sees the sacraments, but he sees not God therein; he hears the preaching, he comes up to the house of prayer, into the midst of the great congregation, he bows his head, but there is no present Deity to him, there is no manifest God. There is no hearing of his voice, there is no bowing before his throne. Doubtless, there is a large number here who must confess that they are not trusting in the blood of Christ, they are not influenced by the Holy Ghost, they do not love God; they cannot say that the bent and tenour of their fires is towards him. Why you have been the last six days about your business, occupying all your time,—and quite right is it to be diligent in business—but how many of you have forgotten God all the while? You have been trading for yourselves, not for God. The righteous man does everything in the name of God:

at least, this is his constant desire. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does, he desires to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. But you have not recognized God in your shop. You have not acknowledged him in your dealings with your fellow-men. You have acted towards them as if there had been no God whatever.

And, perhaps, even this day you must confess that your heart does not love the Lord. You have never gone into his company. You do not seek retirement. You do not relish private prayer. Now God's children cannot be happy without sometimes talking to their Father. The sons of God must have frequent interviews with Jehovah. They love to cling to him. They feel that he is their life, their love, their all. Their daily cry is, "Lord, draw me to thyself; come thou to me, or draw me up to thee." They pant to know more of God; they long to reflect more of his image, they seek to keep his law; and it is their desire that they may be saturated with his Spirit. But such are not your desires. You have no such longings as these. It is true you are not addicted to strong drink, you do not swear, you are no thief, you are no harlot. In all these things you are blameless; but yet are you ungodly, without God in the world. He is not your friend, he is not your helper. You do not cleave to him with purpose of heart. You are not his child. You have not "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." You could do as well without a God as with one. In fact you feel that the thought of God, if you think of it solemnly, strikes you with terror, and excites in your breasts, no emotions of delight. You are ungodly. Well then, mark, whatever I have to say this morning, belongs to you. Don't be looking round you and saying, I wonder how this will suit my neighbor. Do not I beseech you be thinking of some thriftless loon who has spent his estate in extravagance and debauchery, but be thinking of yourself. If you are not born again, if you are not a partaker of the Spirit, if you are not reconciled to God, if your sins be not forgiven, if you are not this day a living member of the living church of Christ, all the curses that are written in this book belong to you, and that part of them in particular which it will be my solemn business to thunder out this morning. I pray God that this part may be applied to your soul, that you may be made to tremble before the Most High, and seek him who will certainly be found of you, if you seek him with all your hearts.

You will readily perceive that my text may be divided into three parts. You have, first, *a fearful negative*—"The ungodly are not so." You have in the next place *a terrible comparison*—"they are like the chaff. Then you have, thirdly, *an awful prophesy*—"They are like the chaff which *the wind driveth away.*"

I. First, then, you have here A FEARFUL NEGATIVE. The vulgate Latin version, the Arabic and Septuagint, read this first sentence thus:—"Not so the ungodly, not so;" for according to their version there is a double negative here—"Not so the ungodly, not so." Now in order to understand what is meant by this negative you must read the third verse. The righteous man is said to be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper;"—"Not so the ungodly, not so."

To explore the negative, we must take each clause of this sentence. The ungodly are not like *a tree planted*. If they may be compared to a tree at all, they are as trees "twice dead plucked up by the roots;" or if they are to be compared to anything that hath life, then are they like the tree in the desert which is planted there by a chance hand, which hath nought to nourish it. It is the peculiar characteristic of the Christian man, that he is like "a tree planted." That is to say, there is a special providence exercised in his position and in his culture. You all know the difference between a tree that is planted and a tree that is self-sown. The tree that is planted in the garden is visited by the husbandman. He digs about it; he dungs it; he trims it, prunes it, and looks for its fruit. It is an

object of property and of special care. The wild tree in the forest, the tree which is self-sown upon the plain, no one owns, no one watches over it; no heart will sigh if the lightning flash shall shiver it; no tear will be wept if the blast should light upon it and all its leaves should wither. It is no man's property. It shelters no man's roof. No man careth for it. Let it die, why doth it stand there to suck nourishment from the soil and yield none again.

The ungodly are, it is true, the subjects of a universal providence, even as everything is ordered of God; but the righteous have a special providence over them. They are *trees planted*. Everything which takes place works together for their good. The Lord their God is their guardian. He watches the earth that it should bring forth for them its fruit. The precious things of the heavens, the dew, and the deep that coucheth beneath, and the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon—these are their heritage. He watcheth everything round about them. If pestilence stalk through the land, he permitteth not one of its shafts to hit, unless he seeth it is for good. If war ariseth, behold he stretches his aegis over his children; and if famine comes, they shall be fed, and in the days of scarcity they shall be satisfied. Is it not a glorious thing for the Christian to know that the very hairs of his head are all numbered, that the angels of God keep watch and ward over him; that the Lord is his shepherd, and therefore, he shall not want? I know this is a doctrine that often comforts me. Let what will happen, if I can but fall back upon the thought that there is a providence in everything, what do I need? A providence in the great and in the little there assuredly is to every child of God. It may be said of every tree of the Lord's right hand planting—"I the Lord do keep it, and will water it every moment; lest any hurt it I will watch it night and day." Upon the righteous there are not only ten eyes, but there are all the eyes of the Omniscient ever fixed both by night and day. The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous. They are like the planted tree. Not so, ye that are ungodly, not so ye; there is no special providence for you. To whom will ye carry your troubles? Where is your shelter in the day of wrath? Where is your shield in the hour of battle? Who shall be your sun when darkness shall gather about you? Who shall comfort you when your troubles shall encompass you round? You have no eternal arm to lean upon. You have no compassionate heart to beat for you. You have no loving eye to watch you. You are left alone! alone! alone! like the heath in the desert, or like the forest tree which no man regardeth, until the time comes when the sharpened axe shall be lifted up, and the tree must fall. "Not so," then "the ungodly, not so." 'Tis a fearful negative the ungodly man is not the object of the special providence of God.

But we must proceed. The righteous man is like a tree planted by the *rivers of water*. Now, a tree that is planted by the rivers of water sends out its roots, and they soon draw sufficient nourishment. The tree that is planted far away upon the arid desert hath its times of drought, it depends upon the casual thunder-cloud that sweeps over it, and distils the scanty drops of rain. But this tree planted by rivers of water hath a perennial supply. It knows no drought, no time of scarcity. Its roots have but to suck up the nourishment which pours itself lavishly there. "Not so the ungodly, not so." They have no such rivers from which to suck their joy, their comfort, and their life. As for the believer, come what may, he can any—if earth shall fail him, then will he look to heaven. If man forsake him, then he looks to the divine man Christ Jesus. If the world should shake, his inheritance is on high. If everything should pass away, he hath a portion that can never be dissolved. He is planted not by brooks that may be dried up, far less in a desert, which only hath a scanty share, but by the rivers of water. Oh, my beloved brethren, you and I know something about what this means. We know what it is to suck up the promises, to drink of the rivers of Christ's fullness.

We know what it is to partake and satisfy ourselves as with marrow and fatness. Well may we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, for our storehouse is inexhaustible, our riches can never be spent. We have wealth that cannot be counted a treasury that never can be drained. This is our glory, that we have a something to rely upon which can never fail us. We are trees planted by the rivers of water. Ah! but not so you that are ungodly, not so. Your days of drought shall come. You may rejoice now, but what will you do upon the bed of sickness, when fever shall make you toss from side-to-side, when head and heart shall be racked with anguish, when death shall stare upon you, and shall glaze your eyes? What will ye do when ye come into the swellings of Jordan? You have joys to-day, but where will be your joys then? You have wells now, but what will you do when these are all stopped up, when these shall all fail, when your skin-bottles are dried when your broken cisterns have emptied themselves of their last drop—what will ye do then, ye ungodly? Surely, this negative is full of awful threatenings to you. You may have a little mirth and merriment now, you may enjoy a little excitement at present, but what will ye do when the hot wind comes upon you—the wind of tribulation? And above all, what will you do when the chilling blast of death shall freeze your blood? Ah, where, oh, where will you then look? You will look no longer to friends, nor to the comforts of home. You cannot find in the hour of death consolation on the bosom of the most loving wife, you will be quite unable then to find peace in all your riches or your treasures. As for your past life, however good it may seem, if you are ungodly, you will find no comfort in the retrospect; and as for the future, you will find no comfort in the prospect, for there will be for you nothing but “a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.” Oh, my ungodly friends, I beseech you, think upon this matter, for if there were nothing worse, the first sentence of my text sounds like the trumpets of doom, and hath in it bitterness like the vials of the Revelation.

Again we must go forward. It is said of the righteous man, that he “*bringeth forth his fruit in his season.*” “Not so the ungodly, not so,”—they bring forth no fruit; or if there be here and there a shrivelled grape upon the vine, it is brought forth in the wrong season when the genial heat of the sun cannot ripen it, and therefore it is sear and worthless. Many people imagine that if they do not commit positive sin they are all right. Now let me give you a little sermon in the midst of my sermon. Here is the text: “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” First, what has Meroz done? Nothing. Secondly, is Meroz cursed? Yes; cursed bitterly. What for?—for doing nothing. Yes, for doing nothing. “Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof,” for what they did not do, “because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Did Meroz fight against God? No. Did Meroz put on a buckler and lay bold on shield and spear and go forth against the Most High? No. What did Meroz do? Nothing. And is it cursed? Yes, cursed bitterly, with the inhabitants thereof “because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Preach that sermon to yourselves when you get home. Draw it out at length, and perhaps while you are sitting down you will say, “Meroz! why that is myself. I don’t fight against God, I am no enemy to Christ, I do not persecute his people, in fact I even love his ministers, I love to go up and hear the Word preached. I should not be happy if I spent my Sunday anywhere but in God’s house. But still that must mean me, for I do not go up ‘to the help of the Lord against the mighty.’ I do nothing. I am an idle do-nothing. I am a fruitless tree.” Ah, then remember you are cursed, and cursed bitterly too. Not for what you do, but for what you don’t do. So here it is one of the sad curses of the ungodly—that they bring forth no fruit in their

season. Why look at many of you. What is the good of you in this world? With regard to your families, you are their main-stay and prop. God bless you in your work, and may you train up your children well. But as to the church, what good are you? You occupy a seat, you have had it these years; how do you know but that you have been occupying a seat which might have been the place where some other sinner would have been converted had he been there? It is true you sit and hear the sermon; yes but what of that, if that sermon shall add to your condemnation? It is true that you make one among many, but what if you should be a black sheep In the midst of the flock! What are you doing for Christ? Of what value are you? Have you added one stone to his spiritual temple? Have you done as much as the poor woman who broke the alabaster box upon his head? You have done nothing for him. He has nourished you and brought you up, and you have done nothing for him. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," but you do not know, you do not consider. Behold, the Lord hath a controversy with you this day, not for what you have done, but for what you have not done. He has sent you the ministry; you are invited every Sabbath-day. With the tears running down my cheeks have I warned you and invited you. You are hearing the Word continually; you are enjoying privileges. God is feeding you in his providence, clothing you in his compassion, and you are doing nothing for him. You are a cumberer of the ground, bringing forth no fruit at all. O my dear hearer, I beseech thee lay this to heart, for this is a curse as well as a sign to you. It is not only a bad trait in thy character, but it is a curse from God. Thou art ungodly, and therefore fruitless. Thou lovest him not, therefore thou art useless. Thou trustest not in Christ, and therefore thou art not like the tree which "bringeth forth his fruit in his season."

Pass on to the description. His leaf also shall not wither. Not so the ungodly, not so." The ungodly man's leaf *shall* wither. I see before me this day many proofs that God's promise is verified to his people. Look round, and behold what a large number of gray-headed men assemble every Lord's day to hear the Word. There are many of them who loved Christ in their youth. Then they had "a joy unspeakable and full of glory" in making a profession of his dear name; and now they have come into what men call the sear and yellow leaf of life, but they do not find it so, for they still bring forth fruit in old age, they are still fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright. Their leaf has not withered, they are just as active in the cause of Christ as ever they were, and perhaps ten times more happy. Instead of bringing forth no fruit, they bring forth richer and more luscious clusters than ever they did before. Walking in the midst of the younger ones they shine as lights in the midst of the world; or to return to the simile, they are like trees whose branches hang down by reason of the abundance of their fruit, even as their heads bow down by reason of the abundance of their years. What a mercy it is, dear brethren, to have Christ for your portion in youth, and such a Christ too as will last us all our life long. To see good old Rowland Hill preaching when he was tottering on the borders of the grave and talking of the faithfulness of Christ—what a glorious sight! There was a proof! That leaf did not wither. Was there ever a tree like this that would maintain its greenness eighty years and yet not wither? Was there ever a religion like this that would make the old men youthful and make their tottering feet leap for joy? And yet this is the religion of Christ. Our leaf withers not. But oh, "Not so the ungodly, not so." Your leaf shall wither; at least when they that look out of the windows are darkened, when the grinders fail because they are few, when your days of old age shall come upon you, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, if not before, shall your leaf wither. But how many there are whose leaves do wither! There comes a blight from God and the tree which looked once green becomes brown and dead, and at last it blackens and has to be removed. We have seen such in our lives. Men that seemed to be getting on in this world,

rich and happy, and respected by almost everybody, but they had no solid background, they had no rock to stand on, no God to trust to. I have seen them spreading themselves like a green bay tree, and I have often envied them as the Psalmist did, but "I looked and lo they were not," I passed by and lo there was not so much as a stump of them left, God had cursed their habitation; as a dream when one awaketh, their image had been despised, as the wax before the fire, they had melted away; like the fat of rams had they been consumed; into smoke did they consume away. "Not so the ungodly, not so," says the text, and surely experience proves it, the ungodly man's leaf must and shall wither. And then it is added concerning the righteous man, "whatsoever he doeth, shall prosper." Godly men, it is true have many tribulations, but I am not sure that they have more than the wicked. I do think that when a man is converted he will find it to be true that religion's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," and he has a better hope of even worldly prosperity when he becomes a Christian, than the ungodly man has. Christian habits are the best business habits, if men would but believe it. When a man mixes his religion with his business and allows every act of his life to be guided by it, he stands the best chance in this world, it I may be allowed such a secular expression, for "Honesty is the best policy" after all, and Christianity is the best honesty. The sharp cutting competition of the times may be called honesty—it is only called so *down here*, it is not called so *up there*, for there is a good deal of cheating in it. Honesty in the highest sense—Christian honesty—will be found after all to be the best policy in everything, and there will ordinarily be a prosperity, even worldly prosperity, attending a good man in the patient industrious pursuit of his calling. But if he does not have that success he craves, still there is one thing he knows, he would have it if it were best for him. I often know Christian men talk in this fashion, "Well, I do but very little business," says one, "but I have enough coming in to live upon comfortably and happy. I never cared much for push and competition; I never felt that I was fit for it, and I sometimes thank God that I never thrust myself out into the rough stream, but that I was content to keep along shore." And I have marked this one thing, and as a matter of fact I know it cannot be disproved, that many such humble-minded men are the very best of Christians, they live the happiest lives, and whatsoever they do certainly does prosper, for they get what they expected though they did not expect much, and they get what they want though their wants are not very large. They are not going in for anything very great, and therefore they do not come out plucked and empty handed, but they just hold on their way, looking to Providence constantly, for their supplies, and they have all they require; and whatsoever they do, prospers. But they can say too, rusts. If he spends it, it does him little service. The man that hath no God, hath no prosperity. Is he fat—he fattens for the slaughter! Is he in adversity—behold the first drops of the fated storm have begun to fall on him. To the ungodly man there is nothing good in this life. The sweet that he tasteth is the sweetness of poison. That which looketh fair is but as paint upon the harlot's face, beneath there is loathsomeness and disease. There may be a greenness and a verdure upon the mound, but within there lies the rotting carcass, the loathsomeness of corruption. Whatsoever the believer doth, it shall prosper. "Not so the ungodly, not so." Surely this first part of my text is quite bad enough—to have the gate of blessedness shut against you, to have the promises denied you, to be without the blessing which is given to the godly—this punishment of the lost surely were enough to make us start in dismay.

II. Now very briefly upon the second point. Listen awhile to THE TERRIBLE COMPARISON. "The ungodly are like the chaff." They are not like the wild tree, for that hath life, and they are dead in sin. They are not compared here even to the dead tree plucked up by the roots, for that may

be of some service. Floating down the stream, the hand of poverty may recall it from the water, and kindle its fire and relieve its cold. They are not even like the heath in the desert, for it hath some uses, and tends to cheer the arid waste. They are like nothing that hath life, nothing that is of any value. They are here said to be like chaff which the wind driveth away. Now you will at once see how terrible is this figure, if you look at it a moment. They are like chaff. Chaff envelopes good corn, but when the wheat is cut down and carried into the barn, the corn alone is useful, the grain alone is looked at, and that chaff which has grown side by side with the good living wheat, is now become utterly useless, and is to be separated and driven away. And the wicked are compared to chaff—think for a moment, of two or three reasons. First, because they are sapless and fruitless. Chaff hath no sap of life in itself. It is of no use, of no service. Men do but desire to get rid of it. They take the fan into their hands that they may thoroughly purge their floor. They cast up the wheat before the wind with the winnowing shovel, that the breath of the air may blow away the chaff, and leave the wheat pure. All that they care for the chaff is that they may get rid of it, that it may be blown away to waste, for it is sapless and fruitless. Then again you notice that it is light and unstable. The wind sweeps through the wheat, the wheat remains unmoved, the chaff flies away. When cast up in the shovel, the wheat soon finds its place, and returns to the spot from which it has been lifted up; but the chaff is light, it has no stability. Every eddying wind, every breath moves it and carries it away. So are the ungodly. They have nothing stable; they are light, they are but as the froth upon the water; they are but as a bubble on the breaker, seen to day and gone, here and there, and then carried away for ever. Again, the wicked are compared to chaff because it is base and worthless. Who will buy it? Who cares for it? In the East at least it is of no good, no use whatever can be made of it. They are content to burn it up and get rid of it, and the sooner they are rid of it, the better pleased are they. So is it with the wicked. They are good for nothing, useless in this world, useless in the world to come. They are the dross, the offal of all creation. The man who is ungodly, however much he may value himself, is as nothing in the estimation of God. Put a gold chain round his neck, put a star upon his breast, put a crown upon his head, and what is he but a crowned heap of dust, useless, perhaps worse than useless. Base in God's sight, he tramples them beneath his feet. The potter's vessel hath some service, and even the broken potsherd might be used. Some Job might scrape himself with it. But what shall be done with the chaff? It is of no use anywhere, and no one careth for it.

See, then, your value, my hearers, if you fear not God. Cast up your accounts and look at yourselves in the right light. You think, perhaps, that you are good for much, but God saith you are good for nothing. You are "like the chaff which the wind driveth away." I linger no more upon this comparison, but choose, rather to dwell upon the third head, which was this:—

III. THE AWFUL PROPHECY contained in the Verse—"They are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." How near the chaff is to the grain! It is, in fact, its envelope; they grow together. My hearers, I wish to speak now very pointedly and personally. How nearly related are the ungodly to the righteous! One of you, it may be, now present, an ungodly man, is the father of a godly child. You have been to that child what the chaff is to the wheat; you have nourished the child—cherished it in your bosom; you have been wrapt about it like the chaff about the grain. Is it not an awful thing for you to think that you should have been in such close relationship to a child of God, but that in the great day of division you must be separated from it? The chaff cannot be taken into heaven with the wheat. I point to another. You are the son of a godly mother; you have grown up

at her knee. She taught you, when you were but a little one, to say your little prayer, and to sing the little hymn,

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child.”

That mother looked upon you as her joy and her comfort. She is gone now. But you were once to her what the chaff is to the wheat. You grew, as it were, upon the same stock, you were of the same family, and her heart was wholly wrapt up in you. You were her joy and her comfort here below. Does it not cause you one pang of regret that, dying as you are, you must everlastingly be separated from her? Where she is you can never come. Mayhap, too, I have here a mother who has lost several infants; she has been to those infants what the chaff is to the wheat—wrapt up in her bosom for a little while she fondled them; and they, God’s good wheat, have been gathered into the garner, and there they are now in Jesu’s floor. There are their little spirits rejoicing before the throne of the Most High. The mother who is left thinks not of it, but she is the mother of angels, and, perhaps, herself a child of hell. Ah, mother! what think you of this? Is this’ separation from your child eternal? Will you be content to be found at God’s great winnowing-day, the chaff, and will you be driven from your children? Shall you see them in heaven—them in heaven, and yourselves then cast out for ever? Can you bear the thought? Hath your heart become brutish? Is your soul harder than a nether mill-stone? Surely, if it be not, the thought of your present intimate connection with God’s people, and of your sure separation, will make you tremble. And oh! my hearers here are some of you sitting side by side with the godly. You sing as they sing, you hear as they hear. Perhaps you assist the outward wants of the church. You are to the church just what the chaff is to the wheat. You are the outward husk, the congregation which surrounds the inner living nucleus of the church. And must it be—must you be separated from us? Are you content to go from the songs of the saints to the shrieks of the doomed? Will you go from the great convocation of the righteous to the last general assembly of the destroyed and cursed in hell? The thought checks my voice. I must speak slowly on this matter for awhile. Well, dear brethren, well I know that this thought used to be dreadful to me. My mother said to me once, after she had long prayed for me, and had come to the conviction that I was hopeless, “Ah,” said she “My son, if at the last great day you are condemned, remember your mother will say Amen to your condemnation.” That stung me to the quick. Must the mother that brought me forth and that loved me say “Amen” to my being condemned at last? Yet such things must be. Doth not the wheat say Amen to the chaff being blown away? Is it not in fact the very prayer of the wheat that it may be separated from the chaff? and surely when that prayer is heard, and awfully answered, the wheat must say Amen to the chaff being blown away into fire unquenchable. Think, my dear hearers, think again. And must it be—must I bid farewell to her I love, who served the Lord in spirit. Must I see her body committed to the grave, and as I stand there must I bid her a last, a final farewell? Must I be for ever separated from her, because I fear not God, neither regard him, and therefore cannot have a portion amongst the Lord’s chosen ones? What, have you lost your relatives for ever? Are your pious fathers and mothers buried in a “sure and certain hope” to which you are strangers? Will you never sing the song of rejoicing with them in heaven? Is there never to be another salutation? Is death a gulf that cannot be bridged to you? Oh, I hope it is the joy of some of us to know we shall meet many of our kindred above, and as we have lost one after another this has been our sweet consolation they are gone and we shall soon follow them; they are not lost but gone before; they are buried as to their flesh, but their souls are in Paradise, and we shall be there also; and, when we have seen our Saviour’s face and have rejoiced in that glorious vision, then shall we see them also, and have deeper and purer

fellowship with them than we ever had before in all the days of our lives. Well, here is a sad prophecy! The wicked are “like the chaff which the wind driveth away.”

But you will remark that the awful character of my text does not appear upon the surface. They “are like the chaff which the wind *driveth away*.” Where—where—where? Where are they driven? The man is in health; the sun shines, the sky is calm, the world is still about him. Suddenly there is seen a little cloud the size of a man’s hand. A little signal overtakes him. The hurricane begins to rise but first it is but a faint breath. The wicked man feels the cold air blowing on him, but he screens it with the physician, and he thinks that surely he shall live. The storm is on. God hath decreed it, and man cannot stay it. The breath becomes a gale, the gale a wind, the wind a storm, the storm a howling hurricane. His soul is swept away. To go to heaven on angels’ wings is a glorious thing; but to be swept out of this world with the wicked is an awful thing—to be carried, not on wings of cherubs, but on the eagle wings of the wind; to be borne, not by yon songsters up to their celestial seats, but to be carried away in the midst of a howling tempest by grim fiends. The wicked are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Do you not catch the thought? I do not know how to bring out the fullness of its poetry—the great storm sweeping man from the place on which he stands. He is driven away. And now cannot your thoughts go further on while I again repeat the question, Whither is he driven? Ah! Whither is he driven? I see him driven from the solid shore of life. He is carried away. But—

“In vain my fancy strives to paint the moment after death.”

I cannot tell you into what state that soul at once enters, that is to say, I cannot tell you by any guess of my own—that were frivolous, and were to play with a solemn matter; but I can tell you one thing, Jesus Christ himself hath said it—“He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” You die, but you die not. You depart, but you depart to fire that never shall be quenched. I will not dwell upon the topic. I return again to ask the question—“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Who here is prepared to make his bed in hell? Who shall lie down and rest for ever in that lake of fire? You must, my hearers, if you are ungodly, except you repent. Are there none of you behind me there, who have been living without Christ, and without hope in the world? Are there none of you? Surely there are some such. I beseech you, think of your destiny—death, and after death the judgment. The wind, and after the wind the whirlwind, and after the whirlwind the fire, and after the fire nothing—for ever for ever, for ever lost, cast away, where ray of hope can never come; where eye of mercy can never look upon you, and hand of grace can never reach you. I beseech you, oh, I beseech you by the living God, before whom you stand this day, tremble and repent. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” “Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die O house of Israel?” “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.”

Oh, I pray God the Holy Spirit to touch some ungodly hearts now, and make you think. And remember my dear hearers, if there be in your bosoms this morning one desire towards Christ, cherish it, blow the little spark till it comes to a flame. If your heart melts ever so little this morning, I beseech you resist not, quench not the heavenly influence. Yield up yourselves and remember the sweet text of last Sunday morning, “whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.”

I thunder at you, but it is to bring you to Christ. Oh that you would but come to him! Oh poor hearts would that ye did but feel! Oh, that ye knew how to weep for yourselves as I could weep for you now. Oh, that ye knew what a fearful thing it will be to be cast away for ever! Why will ye die? Is there anything pleasing in destruction? Is sin so luscious to you that you will burn in hell for ever for it? What, is Christ so hard a master that you will not love him? Is his cross so ugly that ye will not look towards it? Oh, I beseech you by him whose heart is love, the crucified Redeemer, who now speaks through me this morning, and in me weeps over you, I beseech you look to him and be saved, for he came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, and him that cometh to him he will in nowise cast out, for "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

To-day, O Spirit bring sinners to thyself. I exhort you, sinners, lay hold on Christ. Touch the hem of his garment now. Behold, he hangs before you on the cross. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. even so is Jesus lifted up. Look, I beseech you, look and live. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. And O may the Spirit make my appeal effectual! May angels rejoice this day over sinners saved and brought to know the Lord.

The Saviour's Many Crowns

A Sermon

(No. 281)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 30th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“On his head were many crowns.”—Revelation 19:12.

AH, WELL YE KNOW what head this was, and ye have not forgotten its marvellous history. A head which once in infancy reclined upon the bosom of a woman! A head which was meekly bowed in obedience to a carpenter! A head which became in after years a fountain of water, and a reservoir of tears. A head which “sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground!” A head which was spit upon, whose hair was plucked: A head which at the last in the grim agony of death, crowned with thorns, gave utterance to the terrible death-shriek—*lama sabachthani!* A head which afterwards slept in the grave; and—glory be unto him that liveth and was dead, but is alive for evermore—a head which afterwards rose again from the tomb, and looked with radiant eyes of love upon the holy women waiting at the sepulcher. This is the head whereof John speaks in the words of the text. Who would have thought that a head, the visage of which was more marred than that of any other man—a head which suffered more from the tempests of heavenward of earth than ever mortal brow before, should now be surrounded with these many diadems, these star-bestudded crowns!

My brethren, it needs John himself to expound this glorious vision to you. Alas my eye has not yet seen the heavenly glory, nor has my ear heard the celestial song, I am therefore but as a little child among topless mountains, overawed with grandeur, and speechless with awe. Pray for me that I may utter a few words which the Holy Spirit may comfortably apply to your souls, for if he help me not, I am helpless indeed. With his divine aid, I dare to look upon the glorious diadems of our Lord and King. The crowns upon the head of Christ are of three sorts. First, there are the *crowns of dominions*, many of which are on his head. Next, there are the *crowns of victory*, which he has won in many a terrible battle. Then there are the *crowns of thanksgiving* with which his church and all his people have delighted to crown his wondrous head.

I. First, then, let every believing eye look through the thick darkness and behold Jesus us he sits this day upon the throne of his Father, and let every heart rejoice while it sees the many CROWNS OF DOMINION upon his head. First, and foremost, there sparkles about his brow the everlasting diadem of the King of *Heaven*. His are the angels. The cherubim and seraphim continually bound forth his praise. At his behest the mightiest spirit delights to fly, and carry his commands to the most distant world”. He has but to speak, and it is done. Cheerfully is he obeyed, and majestically doth he reign his high courts are thronged with holy spirits, who live upon his smile, who drink light from his eyes, who borrow glory from his majesty. There is no spirit in heaven so pure that it does not bow before him, no angel so bright that it does not veil its face with its wings, when it draweth near to him. Yea, moreover, the many spirits redeemed, delight to bow before him, day without night they circle his throne, singing—“Worthy is he that was slain and hath redeemed us from our sins by his blood, honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might,

be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." To be King of heaven were surely enough! The ancients were accustomed to divide heaven, and earth, and hell, into divers monarchies, and allot each of them to distinct kings; and surely heaven were an empire large enough even for an infinite Spirit. Christ is Lord of all its boundless plains. He laid the precious stones upon which was builded that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; he is the light of that city, he is the joy of its inhabitants, and it is their loving life evermore to pay him honor. Side by side with this bright crown behold another. It is the *iron* crown of hell, for Christ reigneth there supreme. Not only in the dazzling brightness of heaven, but in the black impenetrable darkness of hell is his omnipotence felt, and his sovereignty acknowledged; the chains which bind damned spirits are the chains of his strength; the fires which burn are the fires of his vengeance; the burning rays that scorch through their eyeballs, and melt their very heart, are flashed from his vindictive eye. There is no power in hell besides his. The very devils know his might. He chaineth the great dragon. If he give him a temporary liberty, yet is the chain in his hand, and he can draw him back lest he go beyond his limit. Hell trembles at him. The very howlings of lost spirits are but deep bass notes of his praise. While in heaven the glorious notes shout forth his goodness; in hell the deep growlings resound his justice, and his certain victory over an his foes. Thus his empire is higher than the highest heaven, and deeper than the lowest hell. This earth also is a province of his wide domains. Though small the empire compared with others, yet from this world hath he perhaps derived more glory than from any other part of his dominions. He reigns on earth. On his head is the crown of *creation*. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." His voice said, "Let there be light," and there was light. It was his strength that piled the mountains, and his wisdom balances the clouds. He is Creator. If you lift your eye to the upper spheres, and behold yon starry worlds—he made them. They are not self-created. He struck them off like sparks from the anvil of his omnipotence; and there they glitter, upheld and supported by his might. He made the earth and all men that be upon it, the cattle an a thousand hills, and the birds that make glad the air. The sea is his, and he made it also. Leviathan he hath formed, and though that monster maketh the deep to be hoary, yet is he but a creature of his power. Together with this crown of creation there is yet another—the crown of *providence*, for he sustaineth all things by the word of his power. Everything must cease to be, if it were not for the continual out-going of his strength. The earth must die, the sun must grow dim with age, and nature sink in years, if Christ supplied it not with perpetual strength. He sends the howling blasts of winter; he, anon, restrains them and breathes the breath of spring; he ripens the fruits of summer, and he makes glad the autumn with his harvest. All things know his will. The heart of the great universe beats by his power; the very sea derives its tide from him. Let him once withdraw his hands, and the pillars of earth must tremble; the stars must fall like fig leaves from the tree, and all things must be quenched in the blackness of annihilation. On his head is the crown of providence. And next to this there glitters also the thrice-glorious crown of *grace*. He is the King of *grace*: he gives, or he withholds. The river of God's mercy flows from underneath his throne; he sits as Sovereign in the dispensation of mercy. He hath the key of heaven; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth; he calleth, and the stubborn heart obeys; he willeth, and the rebellious spirit bends its knee; for he is Master of men, and when he wills to bless, none can refuse the benediction. He reigneth in his church amidst willing spirits; and he reigns for his church over all the nations of the world, that he may gather unto himself a people that no man can number who shall bow before the scepter of his love.

I pause here, overcome by the majesty of the subject, and instead of attempting to describe that brow, and those glittering crowns, I shall act the part of a seraph, and bow before that well-crowned head, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, art thou Lord God of hosts! The keys of heaven, and death, and hell, hang at thy girdle; thou art supreme, and unto thee be glory for ever and ever."

And now, my brothers, what say you to this? Do not sundry thoughts at once stir in your hearts? Methinks I hear one say, "If this be so, if Christ hath these many crowns of dominion, how vain it is for me to rebel against him." My hearers, it may be, some of you are striving against Christ. Like Saul of Tarsus, you have become "exceeding mad" against him. Your wife frequents the house of God, and you forbid her. You persecute your child because she follows Jesus. You hate the very name of Christ; you curse his servants; you despise his Word. You would if you could, spit upon his ministers; and, perhaps, burn his people. This know, that you have undertaken a battle in which you are certain of defeat. Who ever above against him and prospered? Go O man and do battle against the lightning, and hold the thunder-bolt in thine hand; go and restrain the sea, and hush the billows, and hold the winds in the hollow of thine hand; and when thou hast done this, then lift thy puny hand against the King of kings. For he that was crucified is thy Master, and though thou oppose him thou shalt not succeed. In thy utmost malice thou shalt be defeated, and the vehemence of thy wrath shall but return upon thine own head. Methinks I see this day the multitudes of Christ's enemies. They stand up; they take counsel together—"Let us break his bands in sunder; let us cast away his cords from us." Hear ye, O rebels, yonder deep-sounding laugh? Out of the thick darkness of his tabernacle, Jehovah laughs at you. He hath you in derision. He saith "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Come on, ye enemies of Christ, and be dashed in pieces. Come on in your most vehement force, and fall like the waves that are broken against the immovable rock. He ruleth and he will rule; and you one day shall be made to feel his power. For "At the name of Jesus every knee must bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth."

Another thought, right full of comfort springs up to my mind. Believer, look to Christ's thrice-crowned head this day and be comforted. Is providence against thee? Correct thy speech; thou hast erred, God hath not become thine enemy. Providence is not against thee, for Jesus is its King; he weighs its trials and counts its storms. Thy enemies may strive, but they shall not prevail against thee—he shall smite them upon the cheek-bone. Art thou passing through the fire? The fire is Christ's dominion. Art thou going through the floods? They shall not drown thee; for even the floods obey the voice of the Omnipotent Messiah. Wherever thou art called, thou canst not go where Jesus's love reigns not. Commit thyself into his hands. However dark thy circumstance, he can make thy pathway clear. Though night surround thee, he shall surely bring the day. Only trust thou in him; leave thy concerns both little and great in his Almighty hands, and thou shalt yet see how kind his heart, how strong his hand to bring thee out and glorify thee. Repose your confidence in him who is the King of kings. Come bring your burdens each one of you to his feet, and take a song away. If your hearts be heavy bring them here; the golden scepter can lighten them. If your griefs be many, tell them into his ear; his loving eyes can scatter them, and through the thick darkness shall there be a bright light shining, and you shall see his face and know that all is well.

I am sure there is no more delightful doctrine to a Christian, than that of Christ's absolute sovereignty. I am glad there is no such thing as chance, that nothing is left to itself, but that Christ everywhere hath sway. If I thought that there was a devil in hell that Christ did not govern, I should be afraid that devil would destroy me, If I thought there was a circumstance on earth, which Christ did not over-rule, I should fear that that circumstance would ruin me. Nay, if there were an angel

in heaven that was not one of Jehovah's subjects, I should tremble even at him. But since Christ is King of kings, and I am his poor brother, one whom he loves, I give all my cares to him, for he careth for me; and leaning on his breast, my soul hath full repose, confidence, and security.

II. And now, in the second place, Christ hath many CROWN'S OF VICTORY. The first diadems which I have mentioned are his by right. He is God's only begotten and well-beloved Son, and hence he inherits unlimited dominions. But viewed as the Son of Man, conquest has made him great, and his own right hand and his holy arm have won for him the triumph. In the first place, Christ has a crown which I pray that every one of you may wear. He has a crown of victory over the world. For thus saith he himself, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Did you ever think of what a stern battle that was which Christ had to fight with the world? The world first said, "I will extinguish him, he shall not be known;" and it threw on Christ heaps of poverty that there he might be smothered. But he shone in his poverty, and the seamless coat shone with greater light than the robe of the rabbi. Then the world attacked him with its threatenings. Sometimes they dragged him to the brow of a hill to cast him down headlong; at another time they took up stones to stone him. But he who was not to be bidden by poverty, was not to be quenched by threatening. And then the world tried its blandishments; it came with a fair face and presented to him a crown. They would have taken Christ and would have made him a king; but he who cared not for their frowns was regardless of their smiles. He put away the crown from him; he came not to be a king but to suffer and to die. "My kingdom is not of this world," said he, "else would my servants fight." Have you never thought how through thirty years the world tempted Christ? That temptation of the devil in the wilderness was not the only one which he had to endure. Trials of every shape and size surrounded him, the world emptied its quiver, and shot all its arrows against the breast of the spotless Redeemer; but all holy, all unharmed was he. Still separate from sinners, he walked among them without defilement; feasted among them, and yet did not sanction their gluttony; drank with them, and yet was not a drunkard, acted as they acted in all innocent things, and was the world's man, and yet not a man of the world. He was in the world, but he was not of it; separate, and yet one of themselves; united to our race by closest ties, and yet evermore separate and distinguished from all mankind. I would, my brethren, that we could imitate Christ in our battle with the world. But alas, the world oftentimes gets the upper hand of us. Sometimes we yield to its smiles, and often do we tremble before its frowns. Have hope and courage, believer; be like your Master, be the world's foe and overcome it, yield not, suffer it never to entrap your watchful feet. Stand upright amid all its pressure, and be not moved by all its enchantments. Christ did this, and therefore around his head is that right royal crown of victory; trophy of triumph over the entire forces of the world.

Furthermore, the next crown he wears is the crown by which he has overcome sin. Sin has been more than a match for creatures of every kind. Sin fought the angels and a third part of the stars of heaven fell. Sin defied the perfect Adam and soon overcame him, for even at the first blow he fell. Sin had a stern contest with Jesus our Lord, but in him it found its master. Sin came with all its temptations, but Christ resisted and overcame. It came with its horror and with its curse; Christ suffered, Christ endured, and so destroyed its power. He took the poisoned darts of the curse into his own heart, and there quenched its poison fires by shedding his own blood. By suffering, Christ has become master over sin. The dragon's neck is now beneath his feet. There is not a temptation which he has not known and therefore not a sin which he has not overcome. He has cast down every shape and form of evil, and now for ever stands he more than a conqueror through his glorious sufferings. Oh, my brethren, how bright that crown which he deserves, who hath for ever put away

our sin by the sacrifice of himself. My soul enraptured restrains my voice, and once again I bow before his throne and worship, in spirit, My bleeding Ransomer, my suffering Saviour.

And then again, Christ wears about his head the crown of death. He died, and in that dreadful hour he overcame death, rifled the sepulcher, split the stone which guarded the mouth of the grave, hewed death in pieces and destroyed the arch-destroyer. Christ seized the iron limbs of Death and ground them to powder in his hand. Death swayed his scepter over all the bodies of men, but Christ has opened the gate of resurrection for his redeemed, and in that day when he shall put the trumpet to his lips and blow the resurrection blast, then shall it be seen how Christ is universal monarch over all the domains of death, for as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must. And then again, Christ is not only Lord of the world, king of sin, and king of death, but he is king of Satan too. He met that arch fiend foot to foot. Fearful was the struggle, for our champion sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground; but he hewed his way to victory through his own body, through the agonies of his own soul. Desperate was the encounter. Head and hands, and feet and heart were wounded, but the Saviour flinched not from the fight. He rent the lion of the pit as though he were a kid, and broke the dragon's head in pieces. Satan was nibbling at Christ's heel, Christ trod on him and smashed his head. Now hath Jesus led captivity captive, and is master over all the hosts of hell. Glorious is that victory! Angels repeat the triumphant strain, his redeemed take up the song; and you, ye blood-bought sons of Adam, praise him too, for he hath overcome all the evil of hell itself.

And yet, once again, another crown hath Christ, and that is the crown of victory over man. Would to God, my hearers, that he wore a crown for each of you. What hard work it is to fight with the evil heart of man. If you wish him to do evil, you can soon overcome him; but if you would overcome him with good, how hard the struggle! Christ could have man's heart, but man would not give it to him. Christ tried him in many a way; he wooed him, but man's heart was hard and would not melt. Moses came, and said, "My Master, let me try and open man's heart;" and he used the fire, and the whirlwind, and the hammer of God; but the heart would not break, and the spirit would not open to Christ. Then Christ came, and he said, "Hard-heart, I will win thee; O, icy Soul, I will melt thee." And the Soul said, "No, Jesus, I defy thee." But Christ said, "I will do it." And he came once upon a time to the poor Hard-heart, and brought his cross with him. "See, Hard-heart," said he, "I love thee; though thou lovest not me, yet I love thee, and in proof of this, see here; I will hang upon this cross." And as Hard-heart looked on, suddenly fierce men nailed the Saviour to the tree. His hands were pierced; his soul was rent in agony, and looking down on the Hard-heart, Jesus said, "Hard-heart, wilt thou not love *me*? I love *thee*; I have redeemed thee from death; though thou me, yet do I die for thee; though thou kickest against me yet will I surely carry thee to my throne." And the Hard-heart said, "Jesus, I can bear it no longer, I yield to thee. thy love has overcome me; oh, I would be thy subject for ever, only remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, and let me be numbered with thy subjects both now and for ever." My hearers, has Christ ever overcome you? Say, has his love been too much for you? Have you been compelled to give up your sins, wooed by his love divine? Have your eyes been made to run with tears at the thought of his affection for you, and of your own ingratitude? Have you ever thought this over?—"I, the blackest of sinners, have despised him; his Bible I have left unread; his blood I have trampled under foot, and yet he died for me, and loved me with an everlasting love." Surely, this has made you bow your knee; this has made your spirit cry—

"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;

I will be led in triumph, too,
 A willing captive to my Lord
 To sing the triumphs of his Word.”

If this be the case with you, then you may yourself recognize one of the many crowns that are on his head.

III. Now, this brings me to the third point, and may I very earnestly ask your prayers, that, feeble as I am this morning, I may be helped while I endeavor to dwell upon this sweet subject.

I am preaching in my own spirit against wind and tide. There are times when one preaches with pleasure and delight, enjoying the Word, but now I can get nothing for myself, even if I am giving you anything. Pray for me, that nevertheless the Word may be blessed, that in my weakness God's strength may appear.

The third head deals with the CROWNS OF THANKSGIVING. Surely, concerning these we may well say, “On his head are many crowns.” In the first place, all the mighty doers in Christ's church ascribe their crown to him. What a glorious crown is that which Elijah will wear—the man who went to Ahab, and when Ahab said, “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” reproved him to his very face—the man who took the prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape, but hewed them in pieces and made them a sacrifice to God. What a crown will *he* wear who ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire! What a crown, again, belongs to Daniel, saved from the lion's den—Daniel, the earnest prophet of God. What a crown will be that which shall glitter on the head of the weeping Jeremy, and the eloquent Esaias! What crowns are those which shall begirt the heads of the apostles! What a weighty diadem is that which Paul shall receive for his many years of service! And then, my friends, how shall the crown of Luther glitter, and the crown of Calvin; and what a noble diadem shall that be which Whitfield shall wear, and all those men who have so valiantly served God, and who by his might have put to flight the armies of the Aliens, and have maintained the gospel banner erect in troublous times! Nay, but let me point to you a scene. Elijah enters heaven, and where goes he with that crown which is instantly put upon his head? See, he flies to the throne, and stooping there, he uncrowns himself; “Not unto me, not unto me but unto thy name be all the glory!” See the prophets as they steam in one by one; without exception, they put their crowns upon the head of Christ. And mark the apostles, and all the mighty teachers of the church; they all bow there and cast their crowns at his feet, who, by his grace, enabled them to win them.

“I ask them whence their victory came;
 They, with united breath,
 Ascribe their triumph to the Lamb,
 Their conquest to HIS DEATH.”

Not only the mighty doers but the mighty sufferers do this. How brilliant are the ruby crowns of the martyred saints. From the stake, from the gibbet, from the fire, they ascended up to God; and among the bright ones they are doubly bright, fairest of the mighty host that surrounds the throne of the Blessed One. What crowns they wear! I must confess that I have often envied them. It is a happy thing to live in peaceful days; but while happy, it is not honorable. How much more honorable to have died the death of Lawrence, grilled to death upon that fiery gridiron, or to die pierced with spears, with every bone dislocated on the rack! A noble way of serving Christ, to have stood calmly in the midst of the fires, and have clapped one's hands, and cried. “I can do all things, even give my body to be burned for his dear names sake!” What crowns are those which martyr's wear! An

angel might blush to think that his dignity was so small compared with that of those riders in chariots of fire. Where are all those crowns? They are on the head of Christ. Not a martyr wears his crown; they all take their blood-red crowns, and then they place them on his brow—the fire crown, the rack crown, there I see them all glitter. For it was his love that helped them to endure; it was by his blood that they overcame.

And then, brethren, think of another list of crowns. They who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. There are a few men whom God has enabled to do much for the church and much for the world. They spend and are spent. Their bodies know no rest, their souls no ease. Like chariots instinct with life, or dragged by unseen but resistless coursers, they fly from duty to duty, from labor to labor. What crowns shall theirs be when they come before God, when the souls they have saved shall enter paradise with them, and when they shall say, “Here am I and the children which thou hast given me! “What shouts of acclamation, what honors, what rewards shall then be given to the winners of souls! What will they do with their crowns? Why, they will take them from their heads and lay them there where sits the Lamb in the midst of the throne. There will they bow and cry, “Jesus, we were not saviours, thou didst it all; we were but thy servants. The victory belongs not to us but to our Master. We did reap, but thou didst sow, we did cast in the net, but thou didst fill it full. An our success is accomplished through thy strength, and by the power of thy grace.” Well may it be said of Christ, “On his head are many crowns.”

But see, another host approaches. I see a company of cherubic spirits flying upwards to Christ; and who are these? I know them not. They are not numbered among the martyrs; I read not their names among the apostles; I do not even distinguish them as having been written amongst the saints of the living God. Who are these? I ask one of them, “Who are you, ye bright and sparkling spirits?” The leader replies, “We are the glorious myriad of *infants*, who compose the family above. We from our mother’s breasts fled straight to heaven, redeemed by the blood of Christ. We were washed from original depravity, and we have entered heaven. From every nation of the earth have we come; from the days of the first infant even to the winding up of earth’s history, we in flocks have sped hither like doves to their windows.” “How came ye here, ye little ones?” They reply, “through the blood of Christ, and we come to crown him Lord of all.” I see the countless multitude surround the Saviour, and flying to him, each one puts its crown upon his head, and then begins to sing again louder than before. But yonder I see another company following them. “And who are ye?” The reply is, “Our history on earth is the very opposite of the story of those bright spirits that have gone before. We lived on earth for sixty, or seventy, or eighty years, until we tottered into our graves from very weakness; when we died there was no marrow in our bones, our hair had grown grey, and we were crisp and dry with age.” “How came ye here?” They reply—“After many years of strife with the world, of trials and of troubles, we entered heaven at last.” “And ye have crowns I see.” “Yes,” they say, “but we intend not to wear them.” “Whither are ye going then?” “We are going to yonder throne for our crowns have been surely given us by grace, for nothing but grace could have helped us to weather the storm so many, many years.” I see the grave and reverend sires pass one by one before the throne, and there they lay their crowns at his blessed feet, and then shouting with the infant throng, they cry, “Salvation unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

And then I see following behind them another class. *And who are ye?* Their answer is “We are the chief of sinners, saved by grace.” And here they come—Saul of Tarsus, and Manasseh, and Rahab, and many of the same class. And how came ye here? They reply, “We have had much

forgiven, we were grievous sinners, but the love of Christ reclaimed us, the blood of Christ washed us, and whiter than snow are we, though once we were black as hell." And whither are ye going? They reply, "We are going to cast our crowns at his feet, and 'Crown him Lord of all.'" Among that throng, my dear hearers, I hope it may be my lot to stand. Washed from many sins, redeemed by precious blood, happy thou that moment be, when I shall take my crown from off my head, and put it on the head of him whom having not seen I love, but in whom believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And it is a happy thought for me, this morning, that many of you will go with me there. Come brother and sisters; in a few more years, many of us who have met Sunday after Sunday in this Music Hall, will walk up in one hand; and without exception, ye saints of God, I am persuaded we shall be prepared there to lay all our honors down, and to ascribe unto him the glory for ever and ever. "Ah, but" says Little-Faith, "I fear I shall never get into heaven, and therefore I shall never crown him." Yes, but Little-Faith, do you know that one of the richest crowns Christ ever wears, and one of the brightest which adorns his brow, is the crown which Little-Faith puts on his head? For Little-Faith when it gets to heaven will say, "O what grace has been shown to me, that though the meanest of the family, I have still been kept—though least of all the saints, yet hell has not prevailed against me—though weaker than the weakest, yet as my days so has my strength been." Will not your gratitude be great? Will not your song be loud, when approaching his dear feet, you lay your honors there and cry, "Blessed be Jesus who has kept my poor soul in all its dangers, and brought me safely at last to himself?" "*On his head were many crowns.*"

I cannot preach any longer, but I must ask you this question, my dear hearers: Have you a crown to put on the head of Jesus Christ to-day? "Yes," says one, "I have. I must crown him for having delivered me out of my last great trouble." "I must crown him," says another, "for he has kept up my spirits when I was well nigh despairing." "I must crown him," says another, "for he has crowned me with lovingkindness and tender mercy." Methinks I see one standing yonder who says, "Would that I could crown him. If he would but save me, I would crown him. Ah, if he would but give himself to me, I would gladly give myself to him. I am too worthless and too vile." Nay, my brother, but does your heart say, "Lord have mercy upon me?" Does your soul now crave pardon and forgiveness through the blood of Christ? Then go boldly near him this day and say to him, "Jesus, I the chief of sinners am, but I rely upon thee;" and in so saying thou put a crown upon his head which shall make glad his heart, even as in the day when his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. Make this the day of your espousals to him. Take him to be thy all in all, and then mayest thou look at this text with pleasure and say, "Yes, on his head are many crowns, and I have put one there, and I shall put another there ere long."

God add his blessing, for Jesus sake! Amen.

Christ's Estimate of His People

A Sermon

(No. 282)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, January 23rd, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”—Song of Solomon 4:10-11.

I SHALL NOT, this evening, attempt to prove that the Song of Solomon has a spiritual meaning. I am sure it has. It has been frequently said, and, I believe, has commonly been thought, that this song was originally written by Solomon upon his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. Now I am as sure as I am of my own existence, that this is one of the grossest mistakes that ever was committed. There is nothing about Pharaoh's daughter in it. It is, first of all, improbable that it was written of her; and in the next place I will go further, and affirm that it is impossible that it could have been written by Solomon in honor of her. If you look all through the song you will find that this is so; in the first beginning she is compared to a shepherdess. Now all shepherds are abominations to the Egyptians; do you think, therefore, that Solomon would compare an Egyptian princess to the very thing which she abominated. In the next place, all the scenery is in the land of Canaan, none of it in Egypt; and besides that, all the places that Solomon speaks of, such as Engedi, Lebanon, Amana, and Damascus, were all out of the way; not one of them would have been passed in coming out of Egypt into Jerusalem, and very probably the Egyptian princess did not even know there were such places at all, so that if Solomon had wished to praise her he would not have compared her eyes to the fish-ponds of Heshbon, but would have spoken of the sweet waters of the Nile. Besides, it could not have been Pharaoh's daughter. Did Pharaoh's daughter ever keep sheep?—and yet the person who is represented here did. Did the watchman ever follow her about the streets, and try to take away her veil from her? Solomon would have shown them something if they had; therefore, that is impossible. In one place, Solomon compares her to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot. Now, horses were, among the Israelites, common things; and what would Pharaoh's daughter have said, if Solomon had compared her to a company of horses? She might have well looked him in the face and said, “Have you not some better comparison for me than my father's horses?” It is very unlikely that Solomon perpetrated that folly. It is improbable, therefore, and we may almost say impossible, that it could be Pharaoh's daughter. She never came from Lebanon and from the top of Amana; most probably she never heard of those places, or, if she heard of them, she could not have come from them, for she came from Egypt. The fact is, that this book has been a puzzle to many men, for the simple reason that it was not written for them at all. Learned men and wise men find this a stone on which they are broken to powder, just because it was not written for them. Men who are disposed to laugh at Scripture find here an opportunity to exercise their profane wit, just because the book is not written for them. This book was called by the Jews, “the Holiest of Holies;” they never allowed any one to read it till he was thirty years of age; it was thought to be

such a Sacred book. Many a Christian who reads it cannot understand it. And as good Joseph Irons says, "This dwarfish age is not likely to esteem this book as it ought to be esteemed; only those who have lived near to Jesus have drunk out of his cup, have eaten his flesh and drank his blood, only those who know the fullness of the word 'communion,' can sit down to this book with delight and pleasure; and to such men these words are as wafers made with honey, manna, angels' food: every sentence is like gold, and every word is like much fine gold." The true believer who has lived near to his Master will find this book to be a mass, not of gold merely, for all God's Word is this, but a mass of diamonds sparkling with brightness, and all things thou canst conceive are not to be compared with it for its matchless worth. If I must prefer one book above another, I would prefer some books of the Bible for doctrine, some for experience, some for example, some for teaching, but let me prefer this book above all others for fellowship and communion. When the Christian is nearest to heaven, this is the book he takes with him. There are times when he would leave even the Psalms behind, when standing on the borders of Canaan, when he is in the land of Beulah, and he is just crossing the stream, and can almost see his Beloved through the rifts of the storm-cloud, then it is he can begin to sing Solomon's Song. This is about the only book he could sing in heaven, but for the most part, he could sing this through, these still praising him who is his everlasting lover and friend.

With these preliminary remarks, let us go at once to the text. I have said that this is Jesus speaking to his Church. How when the Church praises Jesus, you do not wonder, for he deserves all she can say of him, and ten thousand times more. When she uses such large expressions concerning his loveliness, you feel that she falls far short of her mighty theme; that she does but demean him by her comparisons, for she can but compare the greater with the less, and the beautiful and the eternal, with that which is mutable and transient. But to hear Christ turn round upon his Church, and seem to say to her "Thou hast praised me, I will praise thee; thou thinkest much of me, I think quite as much of thee; thou usest great expressions to me, I will use just the same to thee. Thou sayest my love is better than wine, so is thine to me; thou tellest me all my garments smell of myrrh, so do thine; thou sayest my word is sweeter than honey to thy lips, so is thine to mine. All that thou canst say of me, I say it teach to thee; I see myself in thy eyes, I can see my own beauty in thee; and whatever belongs to me, belongs to thee. Therefore, O my love, I will sing back the song: thou hast sung it to thy beloved, and I will sing it to my beloved, thou hast sung it to thy Ishi, I will sing it to my Hephzibah, thou hast sung it to thy husband, I will sing it to my sister, my spouse."

Now note how sweetly the Lord Jesus sings to his spouse, First, he praises *her love*; "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!" Next he praises *her graces*; "The smell of thy ointments, is much better than all spices." Then he praises *her words*; "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb." Then he praises *her thoughts*, the things that do not come out of her mouth, but lie under her tongue; "Honey and milk are under thy tongue." Then he finishes by praising *her works*, "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon."

I. Begin at the beginning then, Christ first PRAISES HIS PEOPLE'S LOVE. Dost thou love God, my hearer? Dost thou love Jesus? If not, stand back! These things have nothing to do with thee, for if thou forest not Christ, thou hast neither part nor lot in the matter. Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. But canst thou say as Peter did, when his Master asked him thrice; "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Canst thou say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; and thou knowest, O my Lord! that my grief is that I do not love thee

more, I pant to have my little love increased, that my heart may be eaten up with love, that zeal of love to thee may completely consume me?" Harken then, to what the Lord Jesus says to thee to-night, by his Holy Spirit, from this song! Thy love, poor, feeble, and cold though it be, is very precious unto the Lord Jesus, in fact it is so precious, that he himself cannot tell how precious it is. He does not say how precious, but he says, "how fair." This is an expression that men use when they do not know how to describe anything. They lift up their hands, they put in a note of exclamation, and they say, "How fair! how precious! how much better is thy love than wine!" The fact is, that Jesus values our love at such a price, that the Holy Spirit when he dictated this Song of Solomon, could not see any word in all human language that was large enough to set forth Christ's estimation of our love. Have you never thought of Christ's love to you, till your heart has been melted, while your beloved spoke to you, till the tears have run down your eyes, and you have believed you could do as Mary Magdalene did, could kiss his feet, and wash them with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head? Now can you believe it? Just what you think of Christ's love, Christ thinks of yours. You value his love, and you are right in so doing; but I am afraid that still you undervalue it. He even values your love, if I may so speak, he sets a far higher estimate upon it than you do; he thinks very much of little, he estimates it not by its strength, but by its sincerity. "Ah," he says, "he does love me, he does love me, I know he does; he sins, he disobeys me, but still I know he loves me, his heart is true, he does not love me as I deserve, but still he loves me." Jesus Christ is delighted with the thought that his people love him, this cheers any gladdens him. Just as the thought of his love gladdens us, so the thought of our love gladdens him. Notice how he puts it, he says, "How much better is thy love than wine!" Now wine when used in Scripture, frequently signifies two things, a great luxury, and a great refreshment. Wine is a luxury, especially it is so in this country, and even in the East, where there was more of it, good wine was still a dainty thing. Now Jesus Christ looks upon his people's love as being a luxury to him; and I will show you that he does. When he sat at the feast of Simon the Pharisee, I have no doubt there were sparkling wine cups on the table, and many rich dainties were there, but Jesus Christ did not care for the wine, nor for the banquet. What did he care for them? That poor woman's love was much better to him than wine. He could say to Simon the Pharisee, if he had chosen, "Simon, put away thy wine cups, take away thy dainties; this is my feast, the feast of my people's love." I told you also that wine was used as an emblem of refreshment. Now, our Saviour has often been refreshed by his people's love. "No," says one, "that cannot be." Yes! you remember once he was weary and thirsty, and sat upon the well of Samaria. He needed wine then indeed to refresh him, but he could not get so much as a drop of water. He spoke to a woman whom he had loved from before all worlds, he put new life into her, and she at once desired to give him drink; but she ran away first to tell to the Samaritans what she had heard. Now the Saviour was so delighted at her wishing to do good, that when his disciples came, they expected to find him fainting, for he had walked many a weary mile that day, so they said, "Whence hath he meat?" and he said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." It was that woman's love that had fed him. He had broken her heart, he had won her to himself, and when he saw the tear roll from her eye, and knew that her heart was set upon him, his spirits all revived, and his poor flagging strength grew strong. It was this encouraged him. Nay, I will go farther. When Christ went to his cross there was one thing that cheered him even in the agonies of death, it was the thought of his people's love. Are we not told by the apostle Paul in the Hebrews, that our blessed and divine husband, the Lord Jesus, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame?" What was that joy? Why, the joy that he should see his seed, and

that seed should love him, and that he should have his love written in their hearts, in remembrance of his dying pains and agonies: Jesus was cheered, even in his death agonies, by the thought of the love of his people, when the bulls of Bashan roared upon him, and the dogs bayed him, when the sun was put out in darkness, when his Father's hand was heavy upon him, when the legions of hell compassed him, when the pangs of body, and the tortures of spirit all beset him; it was this that cheered him, "My people, they are dear to me, for them I stretch these bleeding hands; for them shall this heart be pierced and oh, how they will love me, how they will love me on earth! how they will love me spiritually in Paradise!" This was the wine the Saviour had to drink; this was the cup of his delightful joy that made him bear all these pains without a murmuring, and this was the meaning of these words of Jesus—"How much better is thy love than wine!"

Pause here, my soul, to contemplate a moment, and let thy joy wait awhile. Jesus Christ has banquets in heaven, such as we have never yet tasted, and yet he does not feed there. He has wines in heaven richer far than all the grapes of Eshcol could produce, but where dose he seek his wines? In our hearts, my friends, in our hearts. Not all the love of angels, nor all the joys of Paradise, are so dear to him as the love of his poor people, sprinkled with sin, and compassed with infirmity. Is not that a thought! I may preach about it, I can only speak it to you; read it, mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it; and oh, if you saw him standing here to-night, and looking into your eyes, and saying to you personally,—“You love me, I know that you love me, thy love is to me better far than wine;” would you not fall at his feet and say, “Lord, is my love so sweet to thee? then shame upon me that I should give thee so little of it.” And then you would break out into the Song of *Krishnu*, which we sung this morning,

“O now, my soul, forget no more
The Lord who all the misery bore,
Nor him forget who left his throne,
And for thy life gave up his own.”

This is the first point: the love of the believer is sweet to Christ.

II. Do not imagine, however, that Christ despises our faith, or our hope, or our patience, or our humility. All these GRACES are precious, to him, and they are described in the next sentence under the title of ointment, and the working of these graces, their exercise and development, are compared to the smell of ointment. Now both wine and ointment were used in the sacrifice of the Jews, sweet smelling myrrh and spices were used in meat offerings and drink offerings before the Lord “But,” saith Jesus Christ to his church, “all these offerings of wine, and all that burning of incense, is nothing to me compared to your graces. Your love is my wine, your virtues are my sweet smelling ointments.” For now you have a little faith, but oh, how little it is. You seem to have got just faith enough to know how unbelieving you are; you have got love, but somehow you have only got about love enough to let you know how little you love him. You have some humility, but you have only enough humility to discover you are very proud: you have some real for Christ, but you have only zeal enough to make you chide yourself that you are so cold; you have some hope, but you have only hope enough to lead you to see how despairing and desponding you often are; you have some patience, but you have only patience enough to teach you how often you murmur when you ought not. “I confess,” say you, “that all my graces are a stench in my own nostrils, and all the good things I trust I have, I cannot look upon them with any pride or self-congratulation. I must bury myself in dust and ashes; and even those things, I can but weep over them, for they are so marred by my own evil nature.” But now then, the very things that you and I very properly weep over, Christ delights

in. He loves all these: the smell may seem to be but very faint and feeble, yet Jesus observes it, Jesus smells it, Jesus loves it, and Jesus approves it. Yes, believer, when you are on your sick bed and are suffering with patience; when you go about your humble way to do good by stealth; when you distribute of your alms to the poor; when you lift up your thankful eye to heaven; when you draw near to God with humble prayer, when you make confession of your sin to him; all these acts are like the smell of ointment to him, the smell of a sweet savor, and he is gratified and pleased. O Jesus, this is condescension indeed, to be pleased with such poor things as we have. Oh this is love, it proves thy love to us, that thou canst make so much out of little, and esteem so highly that which is of such little worth! Have you never known a little child when he feels love in his heart go into the garden or the field and bring you a little flower, it may be but a little buttercup or a daisy, a great thing to him, perhaps, but a trifle to you—worthless in fact—you have taken it and you have smiled and have felt happy because it was a token of your child's love? So Jesus esteems your graces, they are his gift to you. Mark, first of all, they are very poor things in themselves; till he esteems them as tokens of your love, and he rejoices in them, and declares they are as sweet to him as all the spices of Araby, and all the rich odours of the merchant. This is the second thing.

III. Now we come to thy third, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb." Christ's people are not a dumb people, they were once but they TALK now. I do not believe a Christian can keep the secret that God gives him if he were to try; it would burst his lips open to get out. When God puts grace into your heart you may try to hide it, but hide it you cannot. It will be like fire in the bones, and will be sure to find its way out. Now the church is a talking church, a preaching church, and a praising church; she has got lips, and every believer will find he must use his lips in the service of Christ. Now it is but poor, poor matter that any of us can speak. When we are most eloquent in our Master's praise, how far our praiser fall beneath his worth! When we are most earnest in prayer, how powerless is our wrestling compared with the great blessing that we seek to obtain! When our song is loudest, and it begins to be something akin to the chorus of the angels, even then how marred it is with the discord of our unbelief and of our worldliness! But Jesus Christ does not find any fault in what the Church speaks. He says, "No, 'Thy lips, O my spouse, drop us the honeycomb.'" You know the honey that drops out of the honeycomb is the best—it is called the life-honey. So the words that drop from the Christian's lips are the very words of his life, his life-honey, and they ought to be sweet to every one. They are as sweet to the taste of the Lord Jesus as the drops of the honeycomb.

A little caution to some of you that talk too much. Some of you do not let your words drop as the honeycomb, they gush out as a great stream that sweeps everything before it, so that others could not thrust in a word edgeways; no, not if it were squeezed together and sharpened at one end could it be got in. They must talk, their tongue seems set on a hinge, like a pendulum, for ever going on, swing! swing! swing! Now Christ does not admire that. He says of his church in his commending, her lips "drop as the honeycomb." Now a honeycomb, when it drops, does not drop go much even as the drops that fall from the eaves of houses; for the honey is thick, and rich, and therefore it takes some time. One drop hangs for a time; then comes another, and then another, and does not all come in quick succession. Now when people are often talking a great deal, it is poor and thin, and good for nothing; but when they have something good to say, it drops by slow degrees like the honey from the honeycomb. Mark, I do not want you to say one good word less. They are those other words, those awkward ones. Oh that we could leave them out! I am as guilty of this myself, I fear, as many others. If we could talk half as much, it would be, perhaps, twice as good;

and if we were to say only a tenth of what we do, perhaps we should be ten times better, for he is a wise man that knows how to speak well, but he is a great deal wiser man that knows how to hold his tongue. The lips of the true church, the lips of the true believer drop like the honeycomb, with rich words, rich thoughts, rich prayers, rich praises. "Oh," says one, "but I am sure my lips do not drop like that when in prayer. Sometimes even I cannot get on at all, and when I am singing I cannot put my heart into it, and when I am trying to instruct others, I feel I am so ignorant that I know nothing myself." That is your estimate;—I am glad you are so humble as to think that. But Christ does not think so. "Ah," he says, "that man would preach if he could; that man would honor me better if he could." And he does not measure what we do, but what we want to do; and so it is that he reckons that our lips drop like the honeycomb. What is sweeter in the world than honey from the honeycomb? But whatever may be the sweetest thing to the world, the words of the Christian are the sweetest things to Christ. Sometimes believers are privileged to set down together, and they begin to talk about what he said, and what he suffered for them here below, they begin to speak of his exceeding glories and his boundless and matchless love; they begin to tell to one another what they have tasted and handled of the good word of life, and their hearts begin to burn within them when they speak of these things by the way. Do you know that Jesus is in that room, smiling Jesus is there, and he is saying to his own soul, "It is good to be here, the lips of these my brethren drop as the honeycomb, and their words are sweet to me." At another time the Christian is alone in his chamber, and he talks with his God in a few broken words, and with many sighs, many tears, and many groans, and little does he think that Jesus Christ is there, saying to such an one, "Thy lips, O my beloved, drop with honey like the honeycomb."

And now Christians will you not talk much about Jesus? Will you not speak often of him? Will you not give your tongue more continually to prayer and praise, and speech that ministers to edifying, when you have such a listener as this, such an auditor who stoops from heaven to hear you, and who values every word you speak for him? Oh, it is a sweet thing to preach when the people listen to catch every word. I would give in if I had to preach to an inattentive audience. And yet I do not know. Plato, we are told, was once listening to an orator, and when all the people had gone away but Plato, the orator went on with all his might. Being asked why he proceeded, he replied, that Plato was sufficient audience for any man. And surely if in preaching, or in praying, all the world should find fault, and all the world should run from it, Jesus is enough to be the hearer for any man. And if he is satisfied, if he says our words are sweeter than the honeycomb, we will not stop; all the devils in hell shall not stop us. We could continue to preach, and praise, and pray, while immortality endures. If this be honey, then the honey shall drop. If Christ prizes it, we set his opinion against all the opinion in the world; he knows better than any others; he is the best judge, for he is the last and final judge—we will go on talking of him, while he goes on to say, our lips drop as the honeycomb. "But," says one, "if I were to try to talk about Jesus Christ, I do not know what I should say." If you wanted any honey, and nobody would bring it to you, I suppose the best way, if you were in the country, would be to keep some bees, would it not? It would be very well for you Christian people if you kept bees. "Well," says one, "I suppose our thoughts are to be the bees. We are always to be looking about for good thoughts, and flying on to the flowers where they are to be found; by reading, by meditation and by prayer, we are to send bees out of the hive." Certainly, if you do not read your Bibles, you will have no honey, because you have no bees. But when you read your Bibles, and study those precious texts, it is like bees settling on flowers, and sucking the sweetness out of them. There are many other books, though the Bible is the chief one, that you may

read with great advantage; over which your thoughts may be busied as bees among flowers. And then you must attend the means of grace continually; you must listen often to the preaching of the Word; and if you hear a minister who is a plant of the Lord's right hand planting, and you in what you hear, you will be like the bees sucking sweetness out of flowers, and your lips will be like the honeycomb. But some people have nothing in their heads, and they are never likely to have for they are so wise that they cannot learn, and they are such fools that they will never teach. Some waste the time they have. Now I would have my people read much the Word of God, and study it, and then read such books as shall illustrate it. I will tell you where I have been sipping a bit just lately) and I have often sipped much from—it is this book of Solomon's Song. It is a favourite book of mine. And there is a sweet little book of Joseph Irons's, called "Nymphas," a blank verse explanation of it. If any of you have that little book, set your bees to work on it, and if you do not suck honey out of it I am very much mistaken. Then let the bees bring the honey to the hive of your memory, and let it be added to the stores of your mind, and in this way you will get rich in precious things, so that when you speak, the saints will be edified, your prayers will be full of marrow and fatness, and your praises will have something in them, because you have sent your bees well abroad, and therefore your lips will drop as the honeycomb.

IV. This brings us to the next topic—"Honey and milk are under thy tongue." I find it necessary when I preach to keep a good stock of words under my tongue as well as those that are on it. It is a curious operation of the mind in the man who continually preaches. It sometimes happens while I am speaking to you that I am thinking about what I am going to say at the close of my sermon, and when I am thinking about people down stairs or in the gallery, and how I shall hit Mr. So-and-so, I am still talking right on, speaking with all my heart on the subject on which I am addressing you. It is because by continually preaching we get into the habit of keeping words under our tongue as well as those that are on the top, and sometimes we find it necessary to keep those words under our tongue altogether and not let them come further. Very often I have got a simile just ready to come out, and I have thought, "Ah, that is one of your laughable similes, take that back." I am obliged to change it for something else. If I did that a little oftener perhaps it would be better, but I cannot do it. I have sometimes a whole host of them under my tongue, and I am obliged to keep them back. "Honey and milk are under thy tongue."

That is not the only meaning. The Christian is to have words ready to come out by-and-bye. You know the hypocrite has words upon his tongue. We speak about solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue, but the Christian has his words first under the tongue. There they lie. They come from his heart; they do not come from the top of his tongue,—they are not superficial service work, but they come from under the tongue—down deep,—things that he feels, and matters that he knows. Nor is this the only meaning. The things that are under the tongue are thoughts that have never yet been expressed; they do not get to the top of the tongue, but lie there half formed and are ready to come out; but either because they cannot come out, or we have not time to let them out, there they remain, and never come into actual words. Now Jesus Christ thinks very much even of these; he says, "Honey and milk are under thy tongue;" and Christian meditation and Christian contemplation are to Christ like honey for sweetness and like milk for nourishment. Honey and milk are two things with which the land of Canaan was said to flow; and so the heart of a Christian flows with milk and honey, like the land which God gave to his ancient people. "Well," says one, "I cannot find that my heart is like that. If I do sit down and think of Jesus, my thoughts turn upon the glories of his person and the excellency of his office; but oh, sir, my thoughts are such dull,

cold, useless things, they do not feed me or delight me.” Ah but, you see, Christ does not estimate them as you do; he feeds on them, they are like honey to him, and though you think little of your own thoughts, and are right in so doing, yet, oh remember, such is the love of Jesus, such is his abundant condescension and compassion, that the very least things that you have he values at a great price. The words you are not speaking the words you cannot utter, the groans you cannot bring out—these the Holy Spirit utters for you, and these Jesus treasures up as choice and peculiarly precious thing. “honey and milk are under thy tongue.”

V. And then, last of all, “the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.” The odoriferous herbs that grew on the side of Lebanon delighted the traveler, and, perhaps, here is an allusion to the peculiarly sweet smell of the cedar wood. Now, the garments of a Christian are two-fold—the garment of imputed righteousness, and the garment of inwrought sanctification. I think the allusion here is to the second. The garments of a Christian are his EVERY DAY ACTIONS—the things that he wears upon him wherever he goes. Now these smell very sweet to the Lord Jesus. And here let us speak to some of you here present who manifestly are not God’s children, for you smell of the garlic of Egypt rather than of the cedar of Lebanon; and there are some professors, and, perhaps; some now present, whose smell is anything but like that of Lebanon. Take heed, ye that do not live up to your profession. You have sad evidences within that you have not possession. If you can dishonor Christ’s holy gospel by the living in sin, tremble! lest when he shall come in the terror of judgment, he should cry, “Depart, ye cursed; I never knew you.” But if you be humble lovers of Christ, and really have your hearts set upon him, your daily actions are observed by him, and the smell of it is to him as sweet as the smell of Lebanon. What should you think if Jesus should meet you at the close of the day, and say to you, “I am pleased with the works of to-day?” I know you would reply, “Lord, I have done nothing for thee.” You would say like those at the last day, “Lord when saw we thee hungry and fed thee? when saw we thee thirsty and gave thee drink?” You would begin to deny that you had done any good thing. He would say, “Ah, when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee; when thou wast at thy bedside in prayer I heard thee. I saw thee when the tempter came and thou saidst, ‘Get thee hence, Satan;’ I saw thee give thine alms to one of my poor sick children; I heard thee speak a good word to the little child and teach him the name of Jesus; I heard thee groan when swearing polluted thine ears; I heard thy sigh when thou sawest the iniquity of this great city; I saw thee when thine hands were busy, I saw that thou wast not an eye-servant or a man-pleaser, but that in singleness of purpose thou didst serve God in doing thy daily business; I saw thee, when the day was ended, give thyself to God again; I have marked thee mourning over the sins thou hast committed, and I tell thee I am pleased with thee.” “The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.” And, again, I hear you say, “But, Lord, I was angry, I was proud,” and he says, “But I have covered up this, I have cast it into the depths of the sea; I have blotted it all out with my blood. I can see no ill in thee; thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.” What would you do then? Would you not at once fall down at his feet and say, “Lord, I never knew love like this: I have heard that love covers a multitude of sins, but I never knew a love so broad as to cover all mine. And then to declare that thou canst see no sin in me at all—ah! that is love?” It may melt our heart, and make us seek to be holy, that we might not grieve Christ, make us labor to be diligent in his service, that we might not dishonor him.

I dare say some of you think when ministers preach or go about to do their pastoral duty, that of course Christ is very much pleased with them. “Ah,” says Mary, “I am only a poor servant girl; I have to get up in the morning and light the fire, lay out the breakfast things, dust the parlour, make

the pies and puddings for dinner, and clear away the things again, and wash them up—I have to do everything there is to do in the house—Christ cannot be pleased with this.” Why Mary, you can serve Christ as much in making beds, as I can in making sermons; and you can be as much a true servant of Christ in dusting a room, as I can in administering discipline in a church. Do not think for a single moment that you cannot serve Christ. Our religion is to be an everyday religion—a religion for the kitchen as well as for the parlour, a religion for the rolling pin, and the jack-towel, quite as much as for the pulpit stairs and the Bible—a religion that we can take with us wherever we go. And there is such a thing as glorifying Christ in all the common actions of life. “Servants be obedient to your masters, not only to those who are good and gentle, but to the froward.” You men of business, you need not think that when you are measuring your ribbons, or weighing out your pounds of sugar, or when you are selling, or buying, or going to market, and such like, that you cannot be serving Christ. Why a builder can serve Christ in putting his bricks together, and you can serve Christ in whatever you are called to do with your hands, if you do it as unto the Lord, and not unto men. I remember Mr. Jay once said, that if a shoeblick were a Christian, he could serve Christ in blacking shoes. He ought to black them, he said, better than anyone else in the parish; and then people would say, “Ah, this Christian shoeblick, he is conscientious; he won’t send the boots away with the heels half done, but will do them thoroughly.” And so ought you. You can say of every article you sell, and of everything you do, “I turned that out of my hands in such a manner that it shall defy competition. The man has got his money’s worth; he cannot say I am a rogue or a cheat. There are tricks in many trades, but I will not have anything to do with them; many get money fast by adulteration in trade, but I will not do it, I would sooner be poor than do it.” Why, the world says, “there is a sermon in that grocer’s window—look, you don’t see him telling lies to puff his goods: there is a sermon there.” People say as they pass by, “It is a godly man that keeps that shop, he cannot bring his conscience down to do what others do. If you go there, you will be well treated, and you will come out of his shop and say, I have spent my money well, and I am glad that I have dealt with a Christian man.” Depend upon it, you will be as good preachers in your shops as I shall be in my pulpit, if you do that; depend upon it, there is a way of serving Christ in this manner; and this is to comfort you and cheer you. Upon all the actions of your daily life the Lord Jesus looks down from heaven and says, “The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.” I know you can hardly believe that Jesus Christ takes notice of such little things as that, but he does. You say, “Oh, but they are too trifling.” But don’t you know, the God that wings an angel guides a sparrow? Don’t you know “the very hairs of your head are all numbered?” God not only wings the whirlwind, and gives an edge to the lightning flash, but he guides the chaff from the hand of the winnower, and steers the grain of dust in the evening gale. Do not think anything too little for you. He observes the mighty orbs as they whirl through space, but he notices you too, as you go about your business. And those little cups of cold water you give to his people—those little services you do for his church, those self-denials that you make for his honor, and those conscientious scruples which you foster, and which will not allow you to act as the world acts, all these he observes, and he says, “The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”

And now to conclude, what shall we say to this? I was reading sometime ago, an article in a newspaper, very much in my praise; and you know, it makes me sad, so sad that I could cry, if ever I see anything praising me; it breaks my heart. I feel I do not deserve it; and then I say, “Now I must try and be better so that I may deserve it. If the world abuses me, I am a match for that, I begin to like it; it may fire all its big guns at me, I will not return a solitary shot, but just store them up,

and grow rich upon the old iron. All the abuse it likes to heap upon me I can stand; but when a man praises me, I feel it is a poor thing I have done, sad that he praises me for what I do not deserve. This crushes me down, and I say I must set to work and deserve this. I must preach better. I must be more earnest, more diligent in my Master's service. Now, will not this text produce just the same effect on you? When the Lord comes to you, and begins saying, "You are not so humble, nor so prayerful, nor so believing as you ought to be;" you say, "I do not care about this whipping;" but when he comes and begins to praise you, and tells you, "That your lips drop as the honeycomb, that all your actions smell of myrrh, and that your love is better than wine, and that the thoughts under your tongue are better to him than wine and milk," what will you say? Oh, Lord, I cannot say thou art mistaken, for thou art infallible; but if I might say such a thing, if I dared so think thou art mistaken, I should say, "Thou art mistaken in me;" but Lord I cannot think thou art mistaken, it must be true. Still, Lord, I do not deserve it; I am conscious I do not, and I never can deserve it, still if thou wilt help me, I will strive to be worthy of thy praise in some feeble measure. I will seek to live up to those high encomiums which thou hast passed upon me. If thou sayest, "My love is better than wine;" Lord, I will seek to love thee better, that the wine may be richer and stronger. If thou sayest, "My graces are like the smell of ointment," Lord, I will try to increase them, so as to have many great pots filled with them; and if my words drop as the honeycomb, Lord, there shall be more of them, and I will try to make them better, so that thou mayest think more of such honey; and if thou declarest that the thoughts under my tongue are to thee like honey and milk, then, Lord, I will seek to have more of those divine thoughts; and if my daily actions are to thee as the smell of Lebanon, Lord, I will seek to be more holy, to live nearer to thee; I will ask for grace, that my actions may be really what thou sayest they are.

Ye that love not God, I can weep over you, for ye have nothing to do with this text. It is a frightful thing that you should be shut out of such praise as this—may Christ bring you in! You must first be brought to feel you are nothing; you must then be led to feel that Christ is everything, and then, after that, you shall understand this text, and these words will be spoken to you.

[Owing to the accidental absence of the Reporter, we are unable to publish last Sunday Morning's Sermon, and we have substituted a discourse, hitherto unpublished, preached on a former occasion.]

The Sweet Uses of Adversity

A Sermon

(No. 283)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 13th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.”—Job 10:2.

AND WILL GOD CONTEND with man? If God be angry, can he not take away the breath of his nostrils, and lay him low in the dust of earth? If the heart of the Almighty be moved unto hot displeasure, can he not speak in his anger, and will not the soul of man sink into the lowest hell? Will God contend—will he set himself in battle array against his creature? and such a creature?—the creature of an hour—a thing that is not, that is here to-day and gone to-morrow? Will the Almighty contend with the nothingness of man? Will the everlasting God take up the weapons of war, and go out to fight against the insect of a day? Well might we cry out to him, “after whom is my Lord the King gone forth? After a dead dog: after a flea?” Wilt thou hunt the partridge on the mountains with an army, and wilt thou go forth against a gnat with shield and spear? Shall the everlasting God who fainteth not, neither is weary, at whose reproof the pillars of heaven’s starry roof tremble and start—will he become combatant with a creature? Yet our text saith so. It speaks of God’s contending with man. Ah, surely, my brethren, it needs but little logic to understand that this not a contention of anger, but a contention of love. It needs, methinks, but a short sight for us to discover that, if God contendeth with man, it must be a contention of mercy. There must be a design of love in this. If he were angry he would not condescend to reason with his creature, and to have a strife of words with him; much less would he put on his buckler, and lay hold on his sword, to stand up in battle and contend with such a creature as man. You will all perceive at once that there must be love even in this apparently angry word; that this *contention* must, after all, have something to do with *contentment*, and that this battle must be, after all, but a disguised mercy, but another shape of an embrace from the God of love. Carry this consoling reflection in your thoughts while I am preaching to you; and if any of you are saying to-day, “Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,” the very fact of God contending with you at all, the fact that he has not consumed you, that he has not smitten you to the lowest hell, may thus, at the very outset, afford consolation and hope.

Now, I propose to address myself to the two classes of persons who are making use of this question. First, I shall speak to *the tried saint*; and then I shall speak to *the seeking sinner*, who has been seeking peace and pardon through Christ, but who has not as yet found it, but, on the contrary, has been buffeted by the law, and driven away from the mercy-seat in despair.

I. First, then, to THE CHILD OF GOD. I have—I know I have—in this great assembly, some who have come to Job’s position. They are saying, “My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.” Sometimes to question God is wicked. As the men of Bethshemesh were smitten with death when they dared to lift up the lid of the ark and look into its sacred mysteries, so is it often death to our faith to question God. It often happens that the sorest plagues come upon us on account of an impudent curiosity which longs to pry between

the folded leaves of God's great council-book, and find out the reason for his mysterious providences. But, methinks *this* is a question that may be asked. Inquiring here will not be merely curious: for there will be a practical affect following therefrom. Tried saint t follow me while I seek to look into this mystery and answer your question, and I pray you, select that one of several answers which I shall propound, which shall, to your judgment, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, seem to be the right one. You have been tried by trouble after trouble: business runs cross against you; sickness is never out of your house; while in your own person you are the continual subject of a sad depression of spirit. It seems as if God were contending with you, and you are asking, "Why is this" 'Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.?'

1. My first answer on God's part, my brother, is this—it may be that God is contending with thee that he may show his own power in upholding thee. God delighteth in his saints; and when a man delights in his child, if it be a child noted for its brightness of intellect, he delights to see it put through hard questions, because he knows that it will be able to answer them all. So God glories in his children. He loves to hear them tried, that the whole world may see that there is none like them on the face of the earth, and even Satan may be compelled before he can find an accusation against them, to resort to his inexhaustible fund of lies. Sometimes God on purpose puts his children in the midst of this world's trials. On the right, left, before, behind, they are surrounded. Within and without the battle rages. But there stands the child of God, calm amidst the bewildering cry, confident of victory. And then the Lord pointeth joyously to his saint, and he saith, "See, Satan, he is more than a match for thee. Weak though he is, yet through my power, he all things can perform." And sometimes God permits Satan himself to come against one of his children; and the black fiend of hell in dragon's wings, meets a poor Christian just when he is faint and weary from stumblings in the valley of humiliation. The fight is long and terrible, and, well it may be, for it is *a worm* combating with *the dragon*. But see what that worm can do. It is trodden under foot, and yet it destroys the heel that treads upon it. When the Christian is cast down he utters a cry, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall yet shall I rise again." And so God pointeth to his child and with, "See there! see what I can do: I can make flesh and blood more mighty than the most cunning spirit; I can make poor feeble foolish man, more than a match for all the craft and might of Satan." And what will you say to this third proof that God puts us through? Sometimes God doth as it were, *himself* enter into the lists; oh, let us wonder to tell it. God to prove the strength of faith, sometimes himself makes war on faith. Think not that this is a stretch of the imagination. It is plain simple fact. Have ye never heard of the brook Jabbok, and of that angel-clothed God who fought with Jacob there, and permitted Jacob to prevail? What was this for? It was this: thus had God determined, "I will strengthen the creature so much, that I will permit it to overcome its Creator." Oh, what noble work is this, that while God is casting down his child with one hand, he should be holding him up with the other: letting a measure of omnipotence fall on him to crush him, while the like omnipotence supports him under the tremendous load. The Lord shows the world—"See what faith can do! "Well does Hart sing of faith—

"It treads on the world and on hell;
It vanquishes death and despair;
And, O! let us wonder to tell,
It overcomes heaven by prayer."

This is why God contends with thee: to glorify himself, by showing to angels, to men, to devils, how he can put such strength into poor puny man, that he can contend with his Maker, and become

a prevailing prince like Israel, who as a prince had power of God, and prevailed. This, then, may be the first reason.

2. Let me give you a second answer. Perhaps, O tried soul! the Lord is doing this to develop thy graces. There are some of thy graces that would never be discovered if it were not for thy trials. Dost thou not know that thy faith never looks so grand in summer weather, as it does in winter? Hast thou not heard that love is too often like a glow-worm, that showeth but little light except it be in the midst of surrounding darkness? And dost thou not know that hope itself is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity? Dost thou not understand that afflictions are often the black foils in which God doth set the jewels of his children's graces, to make them shine the better. It was but a little while ago that on thy knees thou wast saying, "Lord, I fear I have no faith: let me know that I have faith." But dost thou know thou wast praying for trials, for thou canst not know that thou hast faith, until thy faith be exercised. Our trials, so to speak, are like wayfarers in a wood. When there is no intruder in the silent glades of the forest, the hare and the partridge lie; and there they rest, and no eye sees them. But when the intruding footstep is heard, then you see them start and run along the green lane, and you hear the whirr of the pheasant as it seeks to hide itself. Now, our trials are intruders upon our heart's rest; our graces start up and we discover them. They had lain in their lair, they had slept in their forms, they had rested in their nests, unless these intruding trials had startled them from their places. I remember a simple rural metaphor used by a departed divine. He says he was never very skillful at birds' nesting in the summer time, but he could always find birds' nests in the winter. Now, it often happens that when a man has but little grace, you can scarcely see it when the leaves of his prosperity are on him; but let the winter's blast come and sweep away his withered leaves, and then you discover his graces. Depend upon it, God often sends us trials that our graces may be discovered, and that we may be certified of their existence. Besides, it is not merely discovery, it is real growth that is the result of these trials. There is a little plant, small and stunted, growing under the shade of a brood spreading oak; and this little plant values the shade which covers it, and greatly does it esteem the quiet rest which its noble friend affords. But a blessing is designed for this little plant. Once upon a time there comes along the woodman, and with his sharp axe he fells the oak. The plant weeps, and cries, "My shelter is departed: every rough wind will blow upon me, and every storm will seek to uproot me." "No, no," saith the angel of that flower, "now will the sun get at thee; now will the shower fall on thee in more copious abundance than before; now thy stunted form shall spring up into loveliness, and thy flower, which could never have expanded itself to perfection, shall now laugh in the sunshine, and men shall say, 'How greatly hath that plant increased! how glorious hath become its beauty through the removal of that which was its shade and its delight!'" See you not, then, that God may take away your comforts and your privileges to make you the better Christians? Why, the Lord always trains his soldiers, not by letting them lie on feather beds, but by turning them out and using them to forced marches and hard service. He makes them ford through streams, and swim through rivers, and climb mountains, and walk many a long march with heavy knapsacks of sorrow on their backs. This is the way in which he makes soldiers—not by dressing them up in fine uniforms, to swagger at the barrack gates, and to be fine gentlemen in the eyes of the loungers in the park. God knows that soldiers are only to be made in battle; they are not to be grown in peaceful times. We may grow the stuff of which soldiers are made, but warriors are really educated by the smell of powder, in the midst of whizzing bullets, and roaring cannonades—not in soft and peaceful times. Well, Christian, may not this account for it all? Is not

thy Lord bringing out thy graces and making them grow? This is the reason why he is contending with you.

3. Another reason may be found in this. It may be the Lord contends with thee because thou hast some secret sin which is doing thee sore damage. Dost thou remember the story of Moses? Never a man better beloved than he of the Lord his God, for he was faithful in all his house as a servant. But dost thou remember how the Lord met him on the way as he was going to Egypt, and strove with him? find why? Because he had in his house an uncircumcised child. This child was, so long as it had not God's seal upon it, a sin in Moses; therefore God strove with him till the thing was done. Now, too often we have some uncircumcised thing in our house, some joy that is evil, some amusement that is sinful, some pursuit that is not agreeable to his will. And the Lord meets us often as he did Moses, of whom it is written—"The Lord met him by the way in the inn, and sought to kill him."—Exodus 4:24. Now search and look, for if the consolations of God be small with thee, there is some secret sin within. Put it away, lest God smite thee still more sorely, and vex thee in his hot displeasure. Trials often discover sins—sins we should never have found out if it had not been for them. We know that the houses in Russia are very greatly infested with rats and mice. Perhaps a stranger would scarcely notice them at first, but the time when you discover them is when the house is on fire; then they pour out in multitudes. And so doth God sometimes burn up our comforts to make our hidden sins run out; and then he enables us to knock them on the head and get rid of them. That may be the reason of your trial, to put an end to some long-fostered sin. It may be, too, that in this way God would prevent some future sin, some sin hidden from thine own eyes into which thou wouldst soon fall if it were not for his troubling thee by his providence. There was a fair ship which belonged to the great Master of the seas; it was about to sail from the port of grace to the haven of glory. Ere it left the shore the great Master said, "Mariners, be brave! Captain, be thou bold! for not a hair of your head shall perish; I will bring you safely to your desired haven. The angel of the winds is commissioned to take care of you on your way." The ship sailed right merrily with its streamers flying in the air. It floated along at a swift rate with a fair wind for many and many a day. But once upon a time there came a hurricane which drove them from the course, strained their mast until it bent as if it must snap in twain. The sail was gone to ribbons; the sailors were alarmed and the captain himself trembled. They had lost their course. "They were out of the right track," they said; and they mourned exceedingly. When the day dawned the waves were quiet, and the angel of the winds appeared; and they spoke unto him, and said, "Oh angel, wast thou not bidden to take charge of us, and preserve us on our journeys?" He answered, "It was even so, and I have done it. You were steering on right confidently, and you knew not that a little ahead of your vessel lay a quicksand upon which she would be wrecked and swallowed up quick. I saw that there was no way for your escape but to drive you from your course. See, I have done as it was commanded me: go on your way." Ah, this is a parable of our Lord's dealings with us. He often drives us from our smooth course which we thought was the right track to heaven. But there is a secret reason for it; there is a quicksand ahead that is not marked in the chart. We know nothing about it; but God seeth it, and he will not permit this fair vessel, which he has himself insured, to be stranded anywhere; he will bring it safely to its desired haven.

4. I have now another reason to give, but it is one which some of you will not understand; some however will. Beloved, ye remember that it is written, that we "must bear the image of the heavenly," namely, the image of Christ. As he was in this world even so must we be. We must have fellowship with him in his sufferings, that we may be conformable unto his death. Hast thou never thought

that none can be like the Man of Sorrow unless they have sorrows too? How can you be like unto him, who sweat as it were great drops of blood, if you do not sometimes say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Think not, O well-beloved, that thou canst be like the thorn-crowned head, and yet never feel the thorn. Canst thou be like thy dying Lord, and yet be uncrucified? Must thy hand be without a nail, and thy foot without a wound? Canst thou be like him, unless like him thou art compelled to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God is chiselling you—you are but a rough block—he is making you into the image of Christ; and that sharp chisel is taking away much which prevents your being like him. Must he who is our head be marred in his visage by reason of grief, and must we for ever rejoice and sing? It cannot be.

"The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

Sweet is the affliction which gives us fellowship with Christ. Blessed is the plough that ploughs deep furrows, if the furrows be like his. Blessed is the mouth that spits upon us, if the spittle be from the same cause as that which defiled his face. Blessed are the nails and thorns, and vinegar and spear, if they but make us somewhat like to him, in whose glory we shall be partakers when we shall see him as he is. This is a matter which all cannot understand, for it is a path which no unhallowed foot hath trodden, and no careless eye hath so much as seen it. But the true believer can rejoice therein, for he has had fellowship with Christ in his sufferings.

5. To the child Of God I shall give only one more reason. The Lord, it may be, contendeth with thee, my brother, to humble thee. We are all too proud; the humblest of us do but approach to the door of true humility. We are too proud, for pride, I suppose, runs in our very veins, and is not to be gotten out of us any more than the marrow from our bones. We shall have many blows before we are brought down to the right mark; and it is because we are so continually getting up that God is so continually putting us down again. Besides, don't you feel, in looking back on your past troubles, that you have after all been best when you have had troubles? I can truly say, there is a mournfulness in joy, and there is a sweet joy in sorrow. I do not know how it is, but that bitter wine of sorrow, when you once get it down gives such a warmth to the inner man as even the wine of Lebanon can scarce afford. It acts with such a tonic influence upon the whole system, that the very veins begin to thrill as the blood leaps therein. Strange influence! I am no physician, but yet I know that my sweet cup often leaves bitterness on the palate, and my bitter cup always leaves a sweet flavour in the mouth. There is a sweet joy in sorrow I cannot understand. There is music in this harp with its strings all unstrung and broken. There are a few notes I hear from this mournful lute that I never get from the loud-sounding trumpet. Softness and melody we get from the wail of sorrow, which we never get from the song of joy. Must we not account for this by the fact that in our troubles we live nearer to God? Our joy is like the wave as it dashes upon the shore—it throws us on the earth. But our sorrows are like that receding wave which sucks us back again into the great depth of Godhead. We should have been stranded and left high and dry upon the shore if it had not been for that receding wave, that ebbing of our prosperity, which carried us back to our Father and to our God again. Blessed affliction! it has brought us to the mercy seat; given life to prayer; enkindled love; strengthened faith; brought Christ into the furnace with us, and then brought us out of the furnace to live with Christ more joyously than before.

Surely, I cannot answer this question better. If I have not hit upon the right reason, search and look my dearly beloved; for the reason is not far off if ye but look for it—the reason why he contendeth with you.

II. I have thus done with the saints; I shall now turn myself to address THE SEEKING SINNER, who is wondering that he has found no peace and comfort. By the way—running a little apart from the subject—I heard a brother saying the other evening in describing his experience, that before he was converted he Was never sick, never had an affliction at all, but from the very hour when he became converted, he found that trials and troubles came upon him very thick. I have been thinking of that ever since, and I think I have found a reason for it. When we are converted, it is the time of the singing of birds; but do you know the time of the singing of birds is the time of the pruning of vines, and as sure as the time of the singing of birds is come the time of the pruning of vines is come also. God begins to try us as soon as he begins to make our soul sing. This is not running away from the subject. I thought it was. It has just brought me to address the sinner. You have come here this morning saying to yourself, “Sir, not long ago I was awakened to a sense of my lost estate. As I was directed I went home and sought mercy in prayer. From that day till now I have never ceased to pray. But, alas! I get no comfort, sir; I grow worse than ever I was before—I mean I grow more desponding, more sad. If you had asked me before conviction, sir, whether the path to heaven was easy, I should have said ‘yes.’ But now it seems to me to be strewn with flints. That I would not mind but, alas! methinks the gate is shut which lies at the end of the road; for I have knocked, and it has never opened; I have asked, and I have not received; I have sought, and I have not found. In fact, instead of getting peace I receive terror. God is contending with me. Can you tell me, sir, why it is? “I will try to answer the question, God helping me.

1. My first answer shall be this. Perhaps, my dear hearer, God is contending with you for awhile, because as yet you are not thoroughly awakened. Remember, Christ will not heal your wound till he has probed it to its very core. Christ is no unqualified physician, no foolish surgeon, who would close up a wound with proud flesh in it; but he will take the lances, and cut, and cut, and cut again crossways, and he will lay the sore open, expose it, look into it, make it smart; and then after that, he will close up its mouth and make it whole. Perhaps thou hast not as yet known thine own vileness, thine own lost state. Now, Christ will have thee know thy poverty before he will make thee rich. His Holy Spirit will convince thee of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. He will strip thee, and though the pulling off of thy own righteousness be like flaying thee and tearing off the skin from thy breast, yet he will do it; for he will not clothe thee with the robe of his own righteousness till every rag of thy own self-sufficiency is pulled away. This is why God is contending with thee. Thou hast been on thy knees. Go lower, man—go lower; fall flat on thy face. Thou hast said, “Lord, I am nothing.” Go lower, man; say, “Lord, I am less than nothing and the very chief of sinners.” Thou hast felt somewhat; go ask that thou mayest feel more; may be yet more fully convinced of sin—may learn to hate it with a more perfect hatred, and to bewail thy lost estate with a wailing like that of Ramah, when Rachel wept for her children and would not be comforted because they were not. Seek to know the bottom of your case. Make it a matter of conscience to look thy sins in the face, and let hell also blaze before thee: realize the fact that thou deservest to be lost for ever. Sit down often and take counsel with the Lord thy God, whom thou hast grievously offended. Think of thy privileges, and how thou hast despised them; recollect the invitations thou hast heard, and how often thou hast rejected them; get a proper sense of sin, and it may be that God will cease to contend with thee, because the good is all obtained which he sought to give thee by this long and painful contention.

2. Another answer I will give you is this: perhaps God contends with thee in order to try thy earnestness. There are many Mr. Pliables, who set out on the road to heaven for a little time, and

the first boggy piece of road they come to, they creep out on that side which is nearest to their own house, and go back again. Now, God meets every pilgrim on the road to heaven and contends with him. If you can hold your own, and say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him;" if you can dare to do it, and be importunate with God, and say, "Though he never hear me, if I perish I will pray, and perish only there;" then you have got the mastery and you shall succeed. God's Spirit is teaching you how to wrestle and agonize in prayer. I have seen a man, when he has become solemnly in earnest about his soul, pray as though he was a very Samson, with the two gates of mercy in his hand, rocking them to and fro as though he would sooner pull them up—gates, and bar, and all—than he would go away without obtaining a blessing. God loves to see a man mighty in prayer, intent upon getting the blessing, resolved that he will have Christ, or he will perish seeking him. Now, be in earnest. Cry aloud! spare not! Rise in the night-watches! pour out your heart like water before the Lord, for he will answer thee when he hath heard the voice of thy crying; he will hearken to thy supplication and give thee the desire of thy heart.

3. Yet, again, another matter. "May it not be, my dear hearers, that the reason why God contends with you and does not give you peace is, because you are harbouring some one sin" Now, I will not say what it is; I have known a man solemnly under conviction of sin, but the company which he kept on market-day was of such a caste, that until he was separated entirely from his companions, it was not possible he should have peace. I do not know what your peculiar besetting sin may be. It may be a love for frivolity; it may be the desire to associate with those who amuse you; it may be worse. But remember, Christ and thy soul will never be one till thou and thy sins are two. Thy desires and longings must make a clean sweep of the devil and all his crew, or else Christ will not come and dwell with thee. "Well," says one, "but I cannot be perfect." No, but you cannot find peace till you desire to be. Wherever you harbour a sin, there you harbour misery. One sin wilfully indulged in, and not forsaken by true repentance, will destroy the soul. Sins given up are like goods cast out at sea by the mariners in days of storm; they lighten the ship, and the ship will never float till you have thrown all your sins overboard. There is no hope whatever for you till you can truly say,

"Whate'er consists not with thy love,

O help me to resign."

"The dearest idol I have known,

Whate'er that idol be,

Help me to tear it from its throne,

And worship only thee."

4. Then drawing near to a conclusion let me have your most solemn attention while I give one more hint as to the reason why you have not yet found peace. My dear hearers, perhaps it is because you do not thoroughly understand the plan of salvation. I do feel that all ministers,—and here perhaps, I am as great a sinner as any other, and I condemn myself while I chastise others—we all of us do in some way or other, I fear, help to dim the lustre of God's grace, as manifested in the cross of Christ. Often am I afraid lest I should prefer Calvinism to Calvary, lest I should put the sinner's sense of need like a quickset hedge round the cross, and keep the poor sinner from getting as near as he would to the bleeding Lamb of God. Ah, my dear hearers, remember if you would be saved, your salvation comes wholly and entirely from Jesus Christ, the dying Son of God. View him yonder, sinner, sweating in the garden! See the red drops of blood as they fall from that dear face! Oh, see him sinner, see him in Pilate's hall. View the streams of gore as they gush from those

lacerated shoulders. See him, sinner, see him on his cross! View that head still marked with the wounds with which the thorns pierced his temples! Oh, view that face emaciated and marred! See the spittle still hanging there—the spittle of cruel mockers! See the eyes floating in tears with languid pity! Look, too, at those hands, and view them as they stream like founts of blood! Oh, stand and listen while he cries, “*Lama Sabacthani!*” Sinner, thy life is in him that died; thy healing is in yonder wounds; thy salvation is in his destruction. “Oh,” says one, “but I cannot believe.” Ah, brother, that was once my mournful cry. But I will tell you how I came to believe. Once upon a time, I was trying to make myself believe, and a voice whispered, “Vain man, vain man, if thou wouldst believe, come and see!” Then the Holy Spirit led me by the hand to a solitary place. And while I stood there, suddenly there appeared before me One upon his cross. I looked up, I had then no faith. I saw his eyes suffused with tears, and the blood still flowing; I saw his enemies about him hunting him to his grave; I marked his miseries unutterable; I heard the groaning which cannot be described; and as I looked up, he opened his eyes and said to me, “The Son of Man is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.” I clapped my hands, and I said, “Jesus, I do believe, I must believe what thou hast said, I could not believe before, but the sight of thee has breathed faith into my soul. I dare not doubt—it were treason, it were high treason to doubt thy power to save.” Dissolved by his agonies, I fell on the ground, and embraced his feet, and when I fell, my sin fell also! And I rejoiced in love divine that blots out sin and saves from death.

Oh my friend, you will never get faith by trying to make yourself have it. Faith is the gift of Christ! go and find it in his veins. There is a secret spot where faith is treasured up; it is in the heart of Christ; go and catch it sinner as it flows therefrom. Go to your chamber, and sit down and picture Christ in holy vision, dying on the tree, and as your eye sees, your heart shall melt, your soul shall believe, and you shall rise from your knees and cry, “I know whom I may believe, and I am persuaded he is able to save that which I have committed to him until that day.”

And now, may the love of Christ Jesus, and the grace of his Father, and the fellowship of his Spirit, be with you for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

One Antidote for Many Ills

A Sermon

(No. 284)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 9th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”—Psalm 80:10.

THIS SEEMS TO BE the only prayer the Psalmist puts up in this Psalm, as being of itself sufficient for the removal of all the ills over which he mourned. Though he sighs over the strife of neighbors and the ridicule of foes; and lamenting the ill condition of the goodly vine, he deploras its broken hedges, and complains of the wild beasts that waste and devour it, yet he does not petition the Most High against these evils in detail; but gathering up all his wishes into this one prayer, he reiterates it o'er and o'er—“Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.” The reason is obvious. He had traced all the calamities to one source, “O Lord God, how long wilt thou be angry—?” And now he seeks refreshing from one fountain. Let thy face no longer frown, but let it beam upon us with a smile and all shall then be well. This is a select lesson for the church of Christ. “In your troubles, trials and adversities, seek first, chiefly, and above everything else, to have a revival of religion in your own breast, the presence of God in your own heart; having that, you have scarcely anything beside to pray for; whatever else may befall you shall work for your good, and all that seems to impede your course, shall really prove to be a prosperous gale, to waft you to your desired haven: only, take care that you seek of God that you yourselves are turned again unto him, and that he would give you the light of his countenance; so shall you be saved.”

This morning's sermon, then will be especially addressed to my own church, on the absolute necessity of true religion in our midst, and of revival from all apathy and indifference. We may ask of God multitudes of other things, but amongst them all, let this be our chief prayer: “Lord, revive us; Lord, revive us!” We have uttered it in song; let me stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, to utter it in your secret prayers, and make it the daily aspiration of your souls. I feel, beloved, that notwithstanding all opposition, God will help us to be “more than conquerors, through him that loved us,” if we are true to ourselves, and two to him. But though all things should go smoothly, and the sun should always shine upon our heads, we should have no prosperity if our own godliness failed; if we only maintained the form of religion, instead of having the very power of the Holy Spirit manifested in our midst.

I shall endeavor to urge upon you this morning, first of all, *the benefits of revival*, as we shall find some of them suggested in this Psalm; and secondly, *the means of revival*—“Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts;” then, thirdly I shall exhort you to *use these means, that you may acquire these benefits*.

I. THE BENEFITS OF REVIVAL TO ANY CHURCH IN THE WORLD will be a lasting blessing. I do not mean that false and spurious kind of revival which was so common a few years ago. I do not mean all that excitement attendant upon religion, which has brought men into a kind

of spasmodic godliness and translated them from sensible beings, into such as could only rave about a religion they did not understand. I do not think that is a real and true revival. God's revivals, whilst they are attended with a great heat and warmth of piety, yet have with them knowledge as well as life, understanding as well as power. The revivals that we may consider to have been genuine, were such as those wrought by the instrumentality of such men as President Edwards in America, and Whitfield in this country, who preached a free-grace gospel in all its fullness. Such revivals I consider to be genuine, and such revivals, I repeat again, would be a benefit to any church under heaven. There is no church, however good it is, which might not be better; and there are many churches sunken so low, that they have abundant need, if they would prevent spiritual death, to cry aloud, "Lord, revive us."

Among the blessings of the revival of Christians, we commence, by noticing *the salvation of sinners*. When God is pleased to pour out his Spirit upon a church in a larger measure than usual, it is always accompanied by the salvation of souls. And oh, this is a weighty matter, to have souls saved. Some laugh, and think the salvation of the soul is nothing, but I trust, beloved, you know so much of the value of souls that you will ever think it to be worth the laying down of your lives, if you might but be the means of the saving of one single soul from death. The saving of souls, if a man has once gained love to perishing sinners, and love to his blessed Master, will be an all-absorbing passion to him. It will so carry him away, that he will almost forget himself in the saving of others. He will be like the stout, brave fireman, who careth not for the scorch or for the heat, so that he may rescue the poor creature on whom true humanity hath set his heart. He must, he will pluck such a one from the burning, at any cost and expense to himself. Oh the zeal of such a man as that Whitfield to whom I have alluded! He says in one of his sermons, "My God, I groan day-by-day over the salvation of souls. Sometimes," he says, "I think I could stand on the top of every hackney-coach in the streets of London, to preach God's Word. It is not enough that I can do it night and day, laboring incessantly by writing and by preaching, I would that I were multiplied a thousand-fold, that I might have a thousand tongues to preach this gospel of my blessed Redeemer." Ah, you find too many Christians who do not care about sinners being saved. The minister may preach, but what heed they the results? So long as he has a respectable congregation, and a quiet people, it is enough. I trust, my friends, we shall never sink to so low a state as to carry on our services without the salvation of souls. I have prayed my God many a time, and I hope to repeat the prayer, that when I have no more souls to save for him, no more of his elect to be gathered home, he may allow me to be taken to himself, that I may not stand asks cumberground in his vineyard, useless, seeing there is no more fruit to be brought forth. I know you long for souls to be converted. I have seen your glad eyes when, at the church-meetings; night after night, sinners have told us what the Lord has done for them. I have marked your great joy when drunkards, blasphemers, and all kinds of careless persons have turned with full purpose of heart unto God, and led a new life. Now, mark you, if these things are to be continued, and above all, if they are to be multiplied, we must have again a revival in our midst. For this we must and will cry, "O Lord our God, visit thy plantation, and pour out again upon us thy mighty Spirit."

Another effect of a revival in a church, is generally *the promotion of true love and unanimity in its midst*. I will tell you the most quarrelsome churches in England, if you will tell me the most lazy churches. It has actually become a proverb now-a-days. People say, when persons are sound asleep, "He is as sound asleep as a church;"—as if they really thought the church was the soundest asleep of anything that exists! Alas that there should be so much truth in the proverb. Where a firm,

established for business would have all its eyes open—where a company, that had for its object the accumulation of wealth, would be ever on the watch—churches, for the most part, seem to neglect the means of doing good and fritter away holy opportunities of advancing their Master's cause; and for this reason, many of us are split in sunder. There are heart-burnings, achings, ranklings of soul, quarellings amongst each other. An active church will be a united church; a slumbering church will be sure to be a quarrelsome one. If any minister desires to heal the wounds of a church, and bring the members into unanimity, let him ask God to give them all enough to fill their hands, and when their hands are full of their Master's work, and their mouths are full of his praise, they will have no time for devouring one another, or filling their mouths with slander and reproach. Oh, if God gives us revival, we shall have perfect unanimity. Blessed be God, we have much of it; but oh for more of it that our hearts may be knit together as the heart of one man,—that we, being one army of the Living God, may none of us have any anger or ill-will towards each other, but being—as I trust we all are—brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, we may live as becometh such. Oh that Christ would give us that spirit that loveth all, hopeth for all, and will bear burdens for all, passing by little things, and differences of judgment and opinion, that so we may be united with a three-fold cord that cannot be broken. A revival, I think, is necessary for the unanimity of the church.

A revival is also necessary, *in order that the mouths of the enemy of the truth may be stopped.* Do they not open wide their mouths against us? Have they not spoken hard things against us?—ay, and not only against us, but against the truth we preach, and against the God we honor. How shall their mouths be stopped? By our replying to them? No; foul scorn we think it to utter one single word in our own defense. If our conduct be not sufficiently upright to commend itself, we will not utter words in order to commend it. But the way we can shut our adversaries' mouths is this: by seeking a revival in our midst. What! do they rail against our ministry? If more souls are saved, can they rail against that? Ay, let them if they will. Do they speak against the doctrines? Let them; but let our lives be so holy that they must lie against us when they dare to say that our doctrines lead any into sin. Let us seek of God that we may be so earnest, so eminently holy, so God-like, and so Christ-like, that to all they say their own consciences may tell them, "Thou utterest a falsehood whilst thou speakest against him." This was the glory of the Puritans: they preached doctrines which laid them open to reproach. I am bold to say I have preached the doctrine of the Puritans, and I am bold to say, moreover, that those parts which have been most objected to in my discourses, have frequently been quotations from ancient fathers, or from some of the Puritans. I have often smiled when I have seen them condemned, and said, "There now, sir, thou hast condemned Charnock, or Bunyan, or How, or Doddridge," or some other saint of God whom it so happened I quoted at the time. The word condemn was theirs, and therefore it did not so much affect me. They were held up to reproach when they were alive, and how did they answer their calumniators? By a blameless and holy life. They, like Enoch, walked with God; and let the world say what they would of them, they only sought to keep their families the most rigidly pious, and themselves the most strictly upright in the world; so that while it was said of their enemies, "They talk of good works," it was said of the Puritans, that "They did them," and while the Arminians, for such they were in those days, were living in sin, he who was called Calvinist, and laughed at, was living in righteousness, and the doctrine that was said to be the promoter of sin was found afterwards to be the promoter of holiness. We defy the world to find a holier people than those who have espoused the doctrines of free-grace, from the first moment until now. They have been distinguished in every history, even by their enemies, as hating been the most devotedly pious, and as having given themselves especially

to the reading of God's Word and the practice of his law; and whilst they said they were justified by faith alone, through the blood of Christ, none were found, so much as they, seeking to honor God in all the exercises of godliness, being "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Their faith let us follow, and their charity let us emulate. Let us seek a revival here; and so our enemies' mouths, if not entirely shut, shall be so far stopped that their consciences shall speak against them whilst they rail against us. We want no eminent reply to silence their calumny; no learned articles brought out in our vindication; no voice lifted up in our favor. I thank my friends for all they do; but I thank them little for the true effect it produces. Let us live straight on; let us work straight on; let us preach straight on, and serve our God better than heretofore, then let hell roar, and earth resound with tumult, the conscious integrity of our own spirit shall preserve us from alarm, and the Most High himself shall protect us from their fury. We need a revival, then, for these three reasons, each of which is great in itself.

Yet, above all, we want a revival, *if we would promote the glory of God*. The proper object of a Christian's life is God's glory. The church was made on purpose to glorify God; but it is only a revived church that brings glory to his name. Think you that all the churches honor God? I tell you nay; there are some that dishonor him—not because of their erroneous doctrines, nor perhaps because of any defect in their formalities, but because of the want of life in their religion. There is a meeting for prayer; six people assemble besides the minister. Does that proclaim your homage to God? Does that do honor to Christianity? Go ye to the homes of these people; see what is their conversation when they are alone; mark how they walk before God. Go to their sanctuaries and hear their hymns, there is the beauty of music, but where is the life of the people? Listen to the sermon, it is elaborate, polished, complete, a master-piece of oratory. But ask yourselves, "Could a soul be saved under it, except by a miracle? Was there anything in it adapted to stir men up to goodness? It pleased their ears; it instructed them in some degree, perhaps, but what was there in it to teach their hearts?" Ah, God knows there are many such preachers. Notwithstanding their learning and their opulence, they do not preach the gospel in its simplicity, and they draw not near to God our Father. If we would honor God by the church, we must have a warm church, a burning church, loving the truths it holds, and carrying them out in the life. Oh that God would give us life from on high, lest we should be like that church of old of whom it was said, "Thou hast a name try live, and art dead." These are some of the benefits of revivals.

II. WHAT ARE THE MEANS OF REVIVAL? They are two-fold. One is, "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts;", and the other is, "Cause thy face to shine." There can be no revival without both of these. Allow me, my dear hearers, to address you one by one, in different classes, in order that I may apply the former of these means to you.

"Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts." Your minister feels that he needs to be turned more thoroughly to the Lord his God. His prayer shall be, God helping him, that he may be more fearless and faithful than ever; that he may never for one moment think what any of you will say with regard to what he utters, but that he may only think what God his Master would say concerning him;—that he may come into the pulpit with this resolve—that he cares no more for your opinion with regard to the truth than if you were all stones, only resolving this much:—come loss or come gain by it, whatsoever the Lord God saith unto him, that he must speak; and he desires to ask his Master that he may come here with more prayer himself than heretofore, that whatever he preaches may be so burnt into his own soul that you may all know, even if you do not think it true yourselves, that at any rate he believes it, and believes it with his inmost soul. And I will ask of God that I may so

preach to you, that my words may be attended with a mighty and a divine power. I do forswear all pretense to ability in this work. I forswear the least idea that I have aught about me that can save souls, or anything which could draw men by the attractions of my speech. I feel that if you have been profited by my preaching, it must have been the work of God, and God alone, and I pray to him that I may be taught to know more my own weakness. Wherein my enemies say aught against me, may I believe what they say, but yet exclaim,

“Weak though I am, yet through his might,
I all things can perform.”

Will you ask such things for me, that I may be more and more turned to God, and that so your spiritual health may be promoted.

But there are some of you who are workers in the church. Large numbers are actively engaged for Christ. In the Sabbath-school, in the distribution of tracts, in preaching the Word in the villages, and in some parts of this great city—many of you are striving to serve God. Now what I ask and exhort you to is this: cry unto God—“Turn us again, O God.” You want, my dear working friends, more of the Spirit of God in all your labors. I am afraid we forget him too much, we want to have a greater remembrance of him. Sunday-school teachers, cry unto God that you may attend your classes with a sincere desire to promote God’s glory, leaning wholly on his strength. Do not be content with the ordinary routine, gathering your children there, and sending them home again but cry, “Lord, give us the agony which a teacher ought to feel for his child’s soul.” Ask that you may go to the school with deep feelings, with throes of love over the children’s hearts, that you may teach them with tearful eyes, groaning before heaven that you may be the means of their salvation and deliverance from death. And you who in other ways serve God, I beseech you do not be content with doing it as you have done. You may have done it well enough to gain some approval of your fellows: do it better, as in the sight of the Lord. I do not mean better as to the outward form, but better as to the inward grace that goeth with it. Oh! seek from God that your works may be done from pure motives, with more simple faith in Christ, more firm reliance on him, and with greater prayer for your success. “Turn us again,” is the cry of all, I hope, who are doing anything for Jesus.

Others of you are intercessors; and here I hope I have taken in all who love the Lord in this place. Oh! how much the strength of a church depends upon these intercessors! I kind almost said we could do better without the workers than the intercessors: We want in every church, if it is to be successful, intercessors with God—men who know how to plead with him and to prevail. Beloved, I must stir you up again on this point. If you would see great things done in this place, or in any other place, in the salvation of souls, you must intercede more earnestly than you have done. I thank God our prayer-meetings are always full; but there are some of you whom I do not see so often as I would desire. There are some of you business-men who are accustomed to come in for the last half-hour, and I have seen you, and called on you to pray. For six months I have not seen some of you at all. There are others whom I know to be as much engaged as you are, who somehow or other manage to be always here. Why is it not so with you? If you do not love prayer, then I wish you not to come until you do. But I do ask of God to bring you into such a state of mind, that your soul may be more thoroughly with the Lord’s church, and you may be more thoroughly devoted to his service. Our prayer-meeting is well attended, and is full, but it shall be better attended yet, and we shall have the men among us coming up “to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” We do want more prayer. Your prayers, I am sure, have been more earnest at home than ever they were, during the last three weeks; let them be more earnest still. It is by prayer we must lean on God; it is by

prayer that God strengthens us. I beseech you, wrestle with God, my dear friends. I know your love to one another, and to his truth. Wrestle with God, in secret and in public, that he would yet open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing upon us, such as we shall not have room enough to receive. There must be a turning again to God of the intercessors in prayer.

Again: we want a turning again to God of all of you who have been accustomed to hold communion with Jesus, but who have in the least degree broken off that holy and heavenly habit. Beloved, are there not some of you who were accustomed to walls with God each day? Your morn was sanctified with prayer, and your eventide was closed in with the voice of praise. You walked with Jesus in your daily business; you were real Enochs, you were Johns, you did lay your head on the bosom of your Lord. But ah! have not some of you known suspended communion of late? Let us speak of ourselves personally, instead of addressing you; have not we ourselves held less communion with Jesus? Have not our prayers been fewer to him, and his revelations less bright to us? Have we not been content to live without Emmanuel in our hearts? How long is it with some of us since our morsel was dipped in the honey of fellowship? With some of you it is weeks and months, since you had your love visit from Jesus. Oh! beloved, let me beseech you, cry unto God, "Turn us again." It will never do for us to live without communion; we cannot, we must not, we dare not live without constant hourly fellowship with Jesus. I would stir you up in this matter. Seek of God that you may return, and experience the loveliness of Jesus in your eyes, that you may know more and more of your loveliness in his eyes.

And once more, beloved, "Turn us again" must be the prayer of all you, not only in your religious labors, but in your daily lives. Oh! how I do groan over each one of you, especially those of you who are my children in Christ, whom God has granted me to be the means of bringing from nature's darkness into marvellous light; that your lives may be on honor to your profession. Oh! my dear hearers, may none among you who make a profession, be found liars to God and man. There are many who have been baptized, who have been baptized into the waters of deception: there are some who put the sacramental wine between their lips, who are a dishonor and a disgrace to the church in which they assemble. Some who sing praises with us here can go and sing the songs of Satan elsewhere. Ay, are there not some among you, whom I cannot detect, whom the deacons cannot, nor your fellow-members either, but whose consciences tell you, you are not fit to be members of a church? You have crept into our number, you have deceived us, and there you are, like a cancer in our midst. God forgive you and change your hearts; God turn you to himself! And oh my brethren one and all of us, though we hope we have the root of the matter in us, yet how much room there is for improvement and amendment! How are your families conducted? Is there as much of that true and earnest prayerfulness for your children as we could desire? How is your business conducted? Are you above the tricks of trade? Do you know how to stand aloof from the common customs of other men, and say, "If all do wrong it is no reason why I should—I must, I will do right?" Do you know how to talk? Have you caught the brogue of heaven? Can you eschew all foolishness, all filthy conversation, and seek to bear the image of Jesus Christ in the world? I do not ask you whether you use the "thee" and "thou," and the outward formalities of ostentatious humility, but I ask you whether you know how to regulate your speech by the Word of God. I trust, in some degree, that you all do but not as we could desire. Cry out, then, ye Christians, "Turn us again, O God!" If others sin, I beseech you, do not you sin, remember how God is dishonored by it. What! will you bring shame on Christ, and on the doctrines we profess? There is enough said against them without our giving cause of offense; lies enough are made up, without our giving any effuse that men should

truthfully speak ill of us. Oh! if I thought it would avail, methinks I would go down upon my knees, my brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, to beg of you, as for my very life, that you would live close to Jesus. I do pray the Holy Spirit that he may so rest on you in every place, that your conversation may be “such as becometh the gospel of Christ;” and that in every act, great or small, and in every word of every sort, there may be the influence from on nigh, moulding you to the right, keeping you to the right, and in everything bidding you to become more and more patterns of godliness, and reflections of the image of Jesus Christ.

Dear friends, to be personal with each other again, are we where we want to be just now many of us? Can we put our hands to our hearts, and say, “O Lord, I am, in spiritual things just where I desire to be?” No, I don’t think there is one of us that could say that. Are we now what we should desire to be if we were to die in our pews? Come now, have we so lived during the past week, that we could wish this week to be a specimen-week of our whole lives? I fear not. Brethren, how are your evidences?—are they bright for heaven? How is your heart?,—is it wholly set on Jesus? How is your faith?—doth it dwell on God alone? Is your soul sick, or is it healthy? Are you sending forth blossoms and bearing fruit, or do you feel dry and barren? Remember, blessed is the man who is planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. But how about yourselves? Are not some of you so cold and languid in prayer, that prayer is a burden to you? How about your trials? Do they not break your heart more, almost, than ever they did? That is because you have forgotten how to cast your burden on the Lord. How about your daily life? Have you not cause to grieve over it, as not being all you could desire it? Ah! beloved, do not reckon it a light matter to be going backwards, do not consider it a small thing to be less zealous than you used to be. Ah! it is a sad thing to begin to decline. But how many of you have done so! Let our prayer be now,—

“Lord, revive us, Lord, revive us,

All our help must come from thee.”

Do, I beseech you, I entreat you, in the name of God our Father, and Jesus Christ our brother, search into your own hearts; examine yourselves, and put up this prayer, “Lord, wherein I am right, keep me so, against all opposition, and conflict; but wherein I am wrong, Lord make me right, for Jesus’ sake.” We must have this turning again unto God, if we would have a revival in our breast. Every unholy liver, every cold heart, every one who is not entirely devoted to God, keeps us back from having a revival. When once we have all our souls fully turned unto the Lord, then I say but not till then, he will give us to see the travail of the Redeemer’s soul, and “God, even our own God shall bless us, and all the ends of the world shall fear him.”

The other means of revival is a precious one—“cause thy face to shine.” Ah! beloved, we might ask of God, that we might all be devoted, all his servants, all prayerful, and all what we want to be; but it would never come without this second prayer being answered; and even if it did come without this, where would be the blessing? It is the causing of his face to shine on his church that makes a church flourish. Do you suppose that, if to our number there were added a thousand of the most wealthy and wise of the land, we should really prosper any the more without the light of God’s countenance? Ah! no, beloved, give us our God, and we could do without them, but they would be a curse to us without him. Do you imagine that the increase of our numbers is a blessing, unless we have an increase of grace? No, it is not. It is the crowding of a boat until it sinks, without putting in any more provision, for the food of those who are in it. The more we have in numbers, the more we need have of grace. It is just this we want every-day: “Cause thy face to shine.” Oh! there have been times in this house of prayer, when God’s face has shone upon us. I can remember seasons,

when every one of us wept, from the minister down almost to the child; there have been times, when we have reckoned the converts under one sermon by scores. Where is the blessedness we once spoke of? Where is the joy we once had in this house? Brethren, it is not all gone; there are many still brought to know the Lord; but oh! I want to see those times again, when first the refreshing showers came down from heaven. Have you never heard that under one of Whitfield's sermons there have been as many as two thousand saved? He was a great man; but God can use the little, as well as the great to produce the same effect; and why should there not be souls saved here, beyond all our dreams? Ay, why not? We answer, there is no reason why not, if God does but cause his face to shine. Give us the shining of God's face; man's face may be covered with frowns, and his heart may be black with malice, but if the Lord our God doth shine, it is enough

“If he makes bare his arm,
Who can his cause withstand
When he his people's cause defends
Who, who can stay his hand?”

It is his good hand with us we want. I do think there is an opportunity for the display of God's hand at this particular era, such as has not been for many years before, certainly, if he doeth anything, the crown must be put on his head, and on his head alone. We are a feeble people: what shall we do? But if he doeth anything, he shall have the crown and the diadem entirely to himself. Oh that he would do it! Oh that he would honor himself! Oh that he would turn unto us that we might turn unto him, and that his face may shine! Children of God, I need not enlarge on the meaning of this. You know what the shining of God's face means; you know it means a clear light of knowledge, a warming light of comfort, a living light poured into the darkness of your soul, an honorable light, which shall make you appear like Moses, when he came from the mountain—so bright, that men will scarce dare to look upon you. “Cause thy face to shine;” Shall we not make this our prayer, dearly beloved? Have I one of my brethren in the faith, who will not this day go home to cry out aloud unto his God, “Cause thy face to shine?” A black cloud has swept over us, all we want is that the sun should come, and it shall sweep that cloud away. There have been direful things; but what of them, if God, our God, shall appear? Let this be our cry, “Cause thy face to shine.” Beloved, let us give no rest unto our God, until he hears this our prayer, “Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

III. Come, now, let me stir you all up, all of you who love the Saviour, to seek after this revival. Some of you, perhaps, are now resolving in your hearts that you will at once, when you reach your homes, prostrate yourselves before your God, and cry out to him that he would bless his church; and oh! do so I beseech you. It is common with us under a sermon to resolve, though after the sermon we are slow to perform. You have often said, when you left the house of God, “I will carry out that injunction of my pastor, and will be much in prayer.” You thought to do it so soon as you arrived at home, but you did not, and so there was an untimely end of the matter—it accomplished not what was designed. But this time, I beseech you, while you resolve be resolute. Instead of saying within yourselves, “Now I will devote myself more to God, and seek to honor him more,” anticipate the resolution by the result. Ye can do more in the strength of God than ye can think or propose to yourselves in the utmost might of man. Resolves may pacify the conscience very frequently for a while, without really benefitting it. You say you will do it, conscience therefore does not reproach you with a disobedience to the command, but ye do it not after all, and so the effect has passed away. Let any holy and pious resolution you now form be this instant turned into prayer. Instead

of saying, "I will do it, put up the prayer, Lord enable me to do it; Lord, grant me grace to do it." One prayer is worth ten thousand resolutions. Pray to God that you, as a soldier of the cross, may never disgrace the banner under which you fight. Ask of him that you may not be like the children of Ephraim, who turned back in the day of battle, but that you may stand fast in all weathers, even as good old Jacob, when "in the day the drought consumed him and the frost by night,"—so may you serve that God who has galled you with so high a galling. Perhaps others of you think there is no need of a revival, that your own hearts are quite good enough; I hope but few of you think so. But if thou dost think so my hearer, I warn thee. Thou fanciest thou art right, and therein thou dost prove that thou art wrong. He who says within himself, "I am rich and increased with goods," let him know that he is "poor and naked and miserable." He who says he needs no revival knoweth not what he says. Beloved, you shall find that those who are noted as best among God's people need to write themselves the word; and those who fancy all goes well in their hearts oftentimes little know that an under-current of evil is really bearing them away as with a tide where they would not wish to go, whilst they fancy they are going on to peace and prosperity.

Oh! beloved, carry into effect the advice I have just given. I know I have spoken feebly. It is the best I can do just now, I have only stirred you up by way of remembrance. Think not my desires are as feeble as my words; imagine not that my anxiety for you is or can be represented by my speech. Ask, I beseech you, ask of God, that to every one of you brethren and sisters, the simple exhortation of one who loves you as his own soul, may be blessed. God is my witness, belayed, that for him I seek to live: no other motive have I in this world, God knoweth, but his glory. Therefore do I bid and exhort you, knowing that you love the same God, and seek to serve the same Christ, do not now, in this hour of peril, give the least cause to the enemy to blaspheme. Oh! in the bowels of Christ, I entreat you for his sake who hung upon the tree and who is now exalted in heaven by his bloody sacrifice offered for your redemption, by the everlasting love of God, whereby you are kept. I exhort, I beseech, I entreat you, as your brother in Christ Jesus, and such an one as your pastor, be in nothing I moved by your adversaries. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for our Saviour's sake." But do ask that your life and conversation may be an honor to your Lord and Master; in nothing give occasion for the enemy to malign our sacred cause; in everything may your course be "like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

But oh! ye who come here and approve the truth with your judgment but yet have never felt its power in your hearts or its influence in your lives, for you we sigh and groan; for your sake I have stirred up the saints among us to pray. Oh how many of you there are that have been pricked in your consciences and hearts many a time. Ye have wept, ay, and have so wept that you have thought with yourselves "Never souls wept as we have done!" But ye have gone back again. After all the solemn warnings ye have heard, and after all the woings of Calvary, ye have gone back again to your sins. Sinner! thou who heedest little for thyself, just hear how much we think of thee. Little dost thou know how much we groan over thy soul. Man! thou thinkest thy soul nothing, yet morning, noon, and night, we are groaning over that precious immortal thing which thou despisest. Thou thinkest it little to lose thy soul, to perish, or mayhap to be damned. Dost thou account us fools that we should cry over thee? Dost thou suppose we are bereft of reason, that we should think thy soul of so much concern, whilst thou hast so little concern for it? Here are God's people, they are crying after thy soul; they are laboring with God to save thee. Dost thou think so little of it thyself, that thou wouldst fool away thy soul for a paltry pleasure, or wouldst procrastinate thy soul's welfare

beyond the limited domain of hope; Oh! sinner, sinner, if thou lovest thyself, I beseech thee, pause and think that what God's people love must be worth something, that what we labor for, and strive for, must be worth something, that what was reckoned worth a ransom so priceless as Jesus paid must have its sterling value in the sight of heaven. Do, I beseech thee, pause? think of the value of thy soul; think how dreadful it will be if it is lost; think of the extent of eternity, think of thine own frailty; bethink thee of thine own sin, and of thy deserving. May God give thee grace to forsake thy wicked ways, turn unto him and live, for he "hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn unto him and live!" Therefore, saith he, "Turn thee, turn thee, why wilt thou die?"

And now oh Lord God of hosts, hear our ardent appeal to thy throne. "Turn us again." Lighten our path with the guidance of thine eye, cheer our hearts with the smiles of thy face. O God of armies, let every regiment and rank of thy militant church be of perfect heart, undivided in thy service. Let great grace rest upon all thy children. Let great fear come upon all the people. Let many reluctant hearts be turned to the Lord. Let there now be times of refreshing from thy presence. To thine own name shall be all the glory, "O thou that are more glorious and excellent then the mountains of prey!"

Man's Ruin and God's Remedy

A Sermon

(No. 285)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 20th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”—Numbers 21:8.

I DO not propose this morning to explain again the mystery of the brazen serpent. As many of you well remember, not long ago I preached upon that subject, and endeavored to expound it in all its lengths and breadths. I have a somewhat similar object at the present time, the details may indeed be different, but after all the moral will be the same.

Man has very many wants, and he should be grateful whenever the least of them is supplied. But he has one want which overtops every other: it is the want of bread. Give him raiment, house him well, decorate and adorn him, yet if you give him not bread, his body faints, he dies of hunger. Hence it is that while the earth when it is tilled is made to bring forth many things that minister unto the comfort and luxury of men, yet man is wise enough to understand that since bread is his chief want, he must be most careful concerning corn. He therefore sows broad acres with it, and he cultivates more of this, which is the grandest necessary, than he doth of anything else in his husbandry. I feel that this is the only excuse I can offer you for coming back again constantly and continually to the simple doctrine of the salvation of the sinner through Christ Jesus. There are many things which the soul wants: it needs instruction, it needs comfort, it needs knowledge of doctrine and enlightenment in its experience; but there is one grand need of the soul, which far surmounts every other, it is the want of salvation, the want of Christ; and I do feel that I am right in repeating again, and again, and again, the simple announcement of the gospel of Christ for poor perishing sinners. At any rate, I know I seldom feel more happy than when I am preaching a full Christ to empty sinners. My tongue becomes something like Anacreon's harp. It is said of it, it resounded love alone. And so my tongue fangs to resound Christ alone, and give forth no other strain, but Christ and his cross; Christ uplifted, the salvation of a dying world; Christ crucified, the life of poor dead sinners. I pray that this morning many here present, who have no clear views of the plan of salvation, may now see for the first time how men are saved through the lifting up of Christ, just, as the poor Israelites in the wilderness were saved from the fiery serpents by lifting up the brazen serpent on the pole.

Solemnly addressing you this morning, I shall need your attention to two things. First—and here, remember, I am about to speak to sinners dead in trespasses and sins—I want your attention to *your ruin*, and next I shall want your faithful consideration of *your remedy*.

I. First of all, oh unregenerate man! thou who hast heard the Word, but hast never felt its power, let me entreat thee, lend me thine ears while I talk to thee of a solemn subject that much concerns thee. **MAN, THOU ART RUINED!** The children of Israel in the wilderness were bitten with fiery serpents, whose venom soon tainted their blood, and after intolerable pain, at last brought on death. Thou art much in the same condition. Thou standest there, healthy in body and comfortable in mind,

and I come not here to play the part of a mere alarmist; but I do beseech thee, listen to me while I tell thee, neither more nor less than the simple but dreadful truth concerning thy present estate, if thou art not a believer in Christ.

Oh sinner! there are four things that stare thee in the face, and should alarm thee. The first thing is *thy sin*. I hear thee say, "Yes I know I am a sinner as well as the rest of mankind;" but I am not content with that confession, nor is God content with it either. There are multitudes of men who make the bare confession of sinnership, the general confession that all men are fallen, but there are few men who know how to take that confession home and acknowledge it as being applicable to them. Ah! my hearers, ye that are without God and without Christ remember, not only is the world lost, but you are lost yourself not only has sin defiled the race, but you yourself are stained by sin. Come, now take the universal charge home to yourself. How many have your sins been! Count them, if you can. Stand here and wonder at them. Like the stars of midnight, or as the sands by the sea shore, innumerable are thine iniquities. Twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty, perhaps more than fifty years have rolled over thy head, and in any one of these years thy sins might out-count the drops of the sea. How innumerable, then, have they become in ALL thy life! And what if thou shouldst say they are but little ones, yet since they are so many, how great has the mountain become. Though they were but as grains of sand, yet are they so many that they might make a mountain that would soar above the stars. Pause, I beseech thee, and let thy conscience have play for a moment. Count over thine iniquities, turn over the pages of thy history, and tell the blots, if thou canst, and count the mistakes. But no, thou art committing fresh sins whilst thou art recounting these, and the denial of thy innumerable sins were but the multiplication of them. Thou art increasing them, mayhap, even whilst thou art telling them. And then think how aggravated they have been. I will not venture to mention the grosser sins into which some of you have fallen. It may be that I have here those who have cursed God to his face who have asked him to blast their limbs and to destroy their souls. I may have those here who have ventured even to deny God's existence, though they have been walking all their lives in the midst of his works, and have even received the breath in their nostrils from him. I may have some who have despised his Word laughed at everything sacred made a jest of the Bible, made a mockery of God's ministers and of his servants. Call I beseech you, these things to your remembrance, for though you have forgotten them, God has not. You have written them in the sand but he has engraven them as in eternal brass, and there they stand against you. Every crime that you have done is as fresh in the memory of the Most High as though it were committed yesterday, and though you think that the repentance of your grey old age might almost suffice to blot out the enormities of your youth, yet be not deceived. Sin is not so easily put away; it needs a greater ransom than a few expressions of regret or a few empty tears. Oh call, ye great sinners, call to your recollection, the enormities you have committed against God. Let your chambers speak, let your beds bear witness against you, and let the days of your feasting, and your hours of midnight rioting—let these things rise up to your remembrance. Let your oaths roll back from the sky against which they have smitten, and let them return into your bosom, to awake your conscience and bestir you to repentance. But what am I saying? I have been talking of *some* men who have committed great iniquity. Ah! sinner, be thou whosoever thou mayest, I charge thee with *great* sin. Brought up in the midst of holy influences, nurtured in God's house, it may be that some of my unregenerate hearers this morning, may not be able to remember a single instance of blasphemy against God. It may be that you have never outwardly done despite to any sacred thing. Ah, my hearer, bethink thee, thy sin may be even greater than that of the profligate, or the debauches, for

thou hast sinned against light and against knowledge; *thou* hast sinned against a mother's prayers and against a father's tears; *thou* rebelled against God's law, knowing the law. When *thou* wast sinning, conscience pricked thee, and yet thou didst sin. Thou knewest that hell was the portion of the ungodly, and yet thou art ungodly still. Thou knowest the gospel of Christ; thou art no ignoramus. Thy mother took thee in her arms to the house of God, and here thou art even now. Every sin thou hast committed receives a greater aggravation on account of the light thou hast received, and the privileges thou hast enjoyed. Oh, my hearer, think not that thou canst escape in this thing; thy sin hath bitten thee with a terrible bite. 'Tis no flesh wound as thou dreamest, but the venom has entered into thy veins. 'Tis no mere scurf upon the surface, but the leprosy lies deep within. Thou hast sinned. Thou hast sinned continually. Thou hast sinned with many aggravations. Oh, may God convict thee of this charge, and help thee to plead guilty to it. Can you not some of you, if you are honest to yourselves, call to remembrance peculiar sins that you have committed. You recollect your sick bed, and your vow you made to God—where is it now? You have returned like the dog to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. You remember that prayer that you offered in the time of your distress: you remember too that God graciously delivered you, but where is the thanksgiving that you promised to him? You said you would give him your heart; but where is it? In the black hand of the devil still! You have been a liar to God, you have deceived him, or you have pretended at least that you would give him your soul, and you have not done so. And think too of certain special sins you have committed after receiving special warning. Do you not remember going out from the house of God with a tender conscience, and then running into sin to harden it again? Do you not remember, some of you, how after being alarmed and startled, you have gone your way, and gone to your evil companions, and laughed away the impressions that you have received? This is no mean sin—to strive against the striving Spirit, and to resist the influence that was drawing you to the right path. I beseech you, call to recollection your sins. Come, don't be cowards. Don't shut up the book; open it. Look and see what you have been and if you have been that which you are ashamed of, I beseech you look it in the face, and make acknowledgment and confess it. There is nothing to be gotten by hiding your sins. They'll spring up, man; if you dig deep as hell to hide them, they'll spring up. Why not now be honest, and look at them today, for they'll look at you by-and-bye, when Christ shall come in the clouds of judgment? If you look not at them, they'll stare you in the face with a look that will wither your soul and blast it into infinite torment and unutterable woe. Your sin, your sin, should make you tremble and feel alarmed.

But I go further. Sinner, thou hast not only thy sin to trouble thee, but there is a second thing, there is *the sentence of condemnation gone out against thee*. I have heard some ministers talk of men being in a state of probation. No such thing; no man has a state of probation at all. Ye are condemned already. You are not to-day, my unregenerate hearers, prisoners at the bar about to be tried for your lives. No, your trial is over, your sentence is past already, and you are now this day condemned. What though no officer has arrested you, though death has not laid his cold hand upon you, yet Scripture saith, "He that believeth not is condemned already because he believeth not on the Son of God." Man, the black cap is on the judge's head. He even now declares thee lost, nay more than this, if thou wouldst rightly know thine own estate, thou art standing—mark that, my careless hearer—thou art standing under the gallows, with the rope on thy neck, and thou hast but to be cast off from the ladder by the hand of death, and thou art swinging in eternity lost and ruined. If ye only knew your position, ye would discover that ye are criminals with your necks on the block

this morning, and the bright axe of justice is gleaming in this morning's sunlight, and God alone knows how long it is ere it shall fall, or rather how soon thou shalt feel its keen edge, and its edge shall be stained with thy blood. Thou art condemned *already*. Take that home, man. Thy sentence is signed in heaven and sealed and stamped, and the only reason why it is not carried out is because God in mercy respites thee. But thou art condemned, and this world is thy condemned cell from which thou shalt soon be taken to a terrible execution.

Now you do not believe this. You think that God is putting you on your trial, and that if you behave as well as you can, you will get off. You think that in some future day you may yet blot out your sin. But when the criminal is condemned, there is no room left for good behavior to alter the sentence. When a capital sentence is passed upon him that sentence is not to be moved by anything that he can do. And your sentence is passed, passed be the judge of all the earth, and nothing you can do can alter that sentence. The law leaves no room for repentance. Condemned you are and condemned you must be, unless that one way of escape, that I am forthwith about to explain, shall be opened to you by God's rich grace—you are condemned *already*.

Now let me ask you one question ere I leave this point. Sinner, you are condemned to-day. I ask you this, whether you do not deserve it? If you are what you should be, and what I hope the Lord will make you, you will say, "Deserve it, ay, that I do!" If I never committed another sin, my past sins would fully justify the Lord in permitting me to go down afire into the pit. The first sin you ever committed condemned you beyond all hope of self-salvation, but all the sins you have committed since then have aggravated your guilt, and surely now the sentence is not only just, but more than just. You will have one day, if you repent not to put your finger on your lips and stand in solemn silence, when God shall ask you whether you have anything to plead why the sentence should not be carried into execution. You will be compelled to feel that God condemns you to nothing more than you deserve, that his sentence is just—a proper one on such a sinner as thou hast been.

Now, these two things are enough to make any man tremble, if he did but feel them—his sin and his condemnation. But I have a third to mention. Sinner, there is this to aggravate thy ease and increase thine alarm—*thy helplessness*, thy utter inability to do anything to save thyself, *even* if God should offer thee the chance. Thou art to-day, sinner, not only condemned, but thou art dead in trespasses and sins. Talk of performing good works—why, man, thou canst not. It is as impossible for thee to do a good work whilst thou art what thou art, as it would be for a horse to fly up to the stars. But thou sayest, "I will repent." Nay, thou canst not. Repentance is not possible to thee as thou art, unless God gives it to thee. Thou mightest force a few tears, but what are those? Judas might do that and yet go out and hang himself and go to his own place. You cannot repent of yourself. Nay, if I had to preach this morning salvation by faith apart from the person of Christ, you would be in as bad a condition as if there were no gospel whatever. Recollect, sinner, thou art so lost, so ruined, so undone, that thou canst do nothing to save thyself. The wound is so bad that it cannot be cured by any mortal hand. Thine inability is so great, that unless God pull thee up out of the pit into which thou hast fallen, thou must lie there and rot to all eternity. Thou art so undone that thou canst neither stir hand, nor foot, nor lip, nor hearts, unless grace help thee. Oh, what a fearful thing it is to be charged, tried, condemned, and then moreover, to be bereft of all power. You are to-day as much in the hand of God's justice as a little moth beneath your own finger. He can save you if he will, he can destroy you if he pleases, but you yourself are unable to escape from him. There is no door of mercy left for you by the law, and even by the gospel there is no door of

mercy which you have power to enter, apart from the help which Christ affords you. If you think you can do anything, you have yet to unlearn that foolish conceit. If you fancy that you have some strength left, you have not yet come where the Spirit will bring you, for he will empty you of all creature pretension, and lay you low and dash you in pieces, and bring you in a mortar and pound you till you feel that you are weak and without strength, and can do nothing.

Now have I not indeed described a horrible position for a sinner to be in—but there is something more remaining, a fourth thing. Sinner, thou art not only guilty of past sin, and condemned for it, thou art not only unable, but if thou wert able, thou art so bad that thou wouldst *never be willing* to do anything that could save thyself. And even if thou hadst no sins in the past, yet art thou lost, man, for thou wouldst go on to commit sin for the future. For this know—thy nature is totally depraved. Thou forest that which is evil, and not that which is good. “Nay,” saith one, “I love that which is good.” Then thou lovest it for a bad motive. “I love honesty,” says one. Yes, because it is the best policy. But dost thou love God? Dost thou love thy neighbor as thyself? No, and thou canst not do this, for thy nature is too vile. Why, man, thou wouldst be as bad as the devil, if God were to withdraw all restraint and let thee alone. Were he but to take the bit out of thy mouth, and the bridle from thy jaws, there is no sin that thou wouldst not commit. Dost thou deny this? Dost thou say, “I am willing; I am willing to be holy and to be saved.” Then God has thee so; for if not thou wouldst never be so by nature. If thou shouldst go out of this hall and say, “I hate such preaching as that;” I should but reply, “I knew you did.” Though one should say, “I will never believe that I am so lost as that,” I should say, “I did not think you ever would—you are too bad to believe the truth;” and if you should say, “I will never be saved by Christ; I will never bow so low as to sue for mercy and accept grace through him;” I should not be surprised, for I know thy nature. Thou art so desperately bad that thou hatest thy own mercy. Thou dost despise the grace that is offered to thee—thou dost hate the Saviour that died for thee, for if not, why dost not thou turn now, man. If thou art not so bad as I say thou art, why not now down on thy knees and cry for pardon? Why not now believe in Christ? Why not now surrender thyself to him? But if thou shouldst do this, then I would say, “This is God’s work, he has made thee do it for if he had not done it thou wouldst not have been humble enough to bow thyself to Christ.” Let Arminianism go to the winds; let it be scattered for ever from off the face of the earth; man is totally unable to feel his misery or seek relief, if he were able, he is totally unwilling. The sinner could not help the Holy Ghost, even if the Holy Ghost wanted the help of man to perfect his own operations. What! can it be possible that any man will say the creature is to help the Creator—that an insect of an hour is to be yoked with the Ancient of Days—the Eternal—that the clay is to help the potter in its own formation? Why, even if we grant the power, where would be the sympathy or the willing hand? Man hates to be saved. He loves darkness, and if he hath the light, it is because the light thrusts itself upon him. He loves death with a fatal infatuation, and if he be made alive, it is because the Spirit of God quickens him, converts his wicked heart, makes him willing in the day of his power, and turns him unto God.

Have I not now this morning rend a most awful indictment against you? Mark, I mean it for every living man, woman, and child in this Hall, who has not faith in Christ. You may be fine gentlemen or grand ladies; you may be respectable tradesmen and very upright in your business, but I charge you before Almighty God with being sinners, condemned sinners, sinners that cannot save yourselves, and sinners, moreover, that would not save yourselves if you could, unless grace made you willing, you are sinners unwilling to be saved. What a fearful indictment is this read in

the face of high heaven! May some sinner as he hears it be compelled to say, "It is true, it is true, it is true of me; O Lord, have mercy upon me!"

II. Having thus set before you the hard part of the subject—THE SINNERS RUIN—I now come to preach of HIS REMEDY.

A certain school of physicians tell us that "*like cures like.*" Whether it be true or not in medicine, I know it is true enough in theology—like cures like. When the Israelites were bitten with the fiery serpents, it was a serpent that made them whole. And so you lost and ruined creatures are bidden now to look to Christ suffering and dying, and you will see in him the counterpart of what you see in yourselves. While you are looking to him, may God fulfill his promise and give you life. A remedy to be worth anything must reach the entire disease. Now Christ on the cross comes to man as man is; not as he may be made, but as he is. And it doth this in the four several respects which I have already described.

I charge you with sin. Now in Christ Jesus behold the sinner's substitute—the sin-offering. Do you see yonder man hanging on the cross; he dies an awful death. In him prophecy receives a terrible accomplishment: of him Almighty vengeance makes a tremendous example. Jehovah hath cast off and abhorred; he hath been wroth with his anointed. The terrors of the Lord are heavy on his soul. And why does that man Christ Jesus die?—not as himself a sinner, but as numbered with transgressors. O soul if thou wouldst know the terrors of the law, behold him who was made the curse of the law. If thou wouldst see the venom of the fiery serpent's bite, look to yonder brazen serpent; and if thou wouldst see sin in all its deadliness look to a dying Saviour. What makes Christ die? Sin! though not his own. What makes his body sweat drops of blood? Sin! What nails his hands? What rends his side? Sin! Sin does it all. And if you are saved it must be through yonder sin-offering, you dying, bleeding Lamb. "But," saith one, "my sins are too many to be forgiven." Stop awhile; turn thine eye to Christ. Sometimes when I think of my sin I think it is too great to be washed away, but when I think of Christ's blood, oh I think there can be no sin great enough for that to fail in cleansing it every whit. I seem to think, when I see the costly price, Christ paid a very heavy ransom. When I look at myself I think it would need much to redeem me, but when I see Christ dying I think he could redeem me if I were a million times as bad as I am. Now remember Christ not only paid barely enough for us, he paid more than enough. The Apostle Paul says, "His grace abounded—"superabounded," says the Greek. It ran over; there was enough to fill the empty vessel, and there was enough to flood the world besides. Christ's redemption was so plenteous, that had God willed it, if all the stars of heaven had been peopled with sinners, Christ need not have suffered another pang to redeem them all—there was a boundless value in his precious blood. And, sinner, if there were so much as this, surely there is enough for thee.

And then again, if thou art not satisfied with Christ's sin-offering, just think a moment; God is satisfied, God the Father is content, and must not thou be? The Judge says, "I am satisfied; let the sinner go free, for I have punished the Surety in his stead "and if the Judge is satisfied, surely the criminal may be. Oh! come, poor sinner, come and see, if there is enough to appease the wrath of God there must be enough to answer all the requirements of man. "Nay, nay," saith one, "but my sin is such a terrible one that I cannot see in the substitution of Christ that which is *like* to meet it." What is thy sin? "Blasphemy." Why, Christ died for blasphemy: this was the very charge which man imputed to him, and therefore you may be quite sure that God laid it on him if men did. "Nay, nay," saith one, "but I have been worse than that; I have been a liar." It is just what men said of him. They declared that he lied when he said, "If this temple be destroyed I will build it in three

days." See in Christ a liar's Saviour as well as a blasphemer's Saviour. "But," says one, "I have been in league with Beelzebub." Just what they said of Christ. They said that he cast out devils through Beelzebub. So man laid that sin on him, and man did unwittingly what God would have him do. I tell thee, even that sin was laid on Christ. Come, sinner, there is not a sin in the world with one exception which Jesus did not bear in his own body on the tree. "Ah, but," says one, "when I sinned, I sinned very greedily.! did it with all my might I took a delight in it." Ah! soul, and so did Christ take a delight in being thy substitute. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished! "Let Christ's willingness respond to the suggestion that thy greediness in sin can make it too heinous to be forgiven. "Ah!" crieth another, "but, sir, I acted ever with such a bad heart: my heart was worse than my actions. If I could have been worse I would. Among all my companions in vice there was not one who was so greedy of it and black in it as I." Yes, but, my dear hearer, if thou hast sinned in thy heart, remember, Christ suffered in his heart. His heart-sufferings were the heart and soul of his sufferings. Look and see that heart all pierced, and the blood and water flowing therefrom, and believe that he is able to take away even thine heart of sin, however black it may be.

"Yes," I hear another self-condemned one exclaim, "but I sinned without any temptation. I did it deliberately in cold blood. I had become such a wicked, beastly sinner, that I used to sit down and gloat over my sin before I committed it." Ah, but sinner, remember before Christ died he thought of it; ay, from all eternity he meditated on becoming thy substitute. It was a matter of premeditation with him, and, therefore let his forethought put aside thy forethought. Let the greatness of his previous thought upon his sacrifice, put away the grievousness of thy sin, on account of its having been committed in cold blood. Does there yet come up some sobbing voice—"I have been worse than all the rest, for I did my sin by reason of a covenant which I made with Satan. I said, 'If I could have a short life and a merry one, I would be content;' I made a covenant with death, and I made a league with hell." And what if I am commissioned to tell you that even this *bite* is not incurable? Remember, Jesus the Son of God made a covenant on thine account. It was a greater covenant than yours, not made with death and hell, but made with his Father on the behalf of sinners. I want, if I can, to bring out the fact, that whatever there is in thy sins there is its counterpart in Christ. Just as when the serpent bit the people, it was a serpent that healed them, so if you are bitten by sin, it is, as it were, thy sin's substitute; it is thy sin laid on Christ that heals you. Oh, turn your eyes then to Calvary, and see the guilt of sin laid upon Christ's shoulders, and say, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," and looking to him thou shalt live.

Secondly, here is a remedy for *the condemnation*. I said, you were not only sinners, but condemned sinners. Yes, and Christ is not only thy substitute for sin, but he is thy condemned substitute too. See him. He stands at Pilate's bar, is condemned before Herod and Caiaphas, and is found guilty. Nay, he stands before the awful bar of God, and though there is no sin of his own put upon him, yet inasmuch as his people's sins were laid on him, justice views him as a sinner, and it cries, "Let the sword be bathed in his blood." Christ was condemned for sinners that they might not be condemned. Look up, look away from the sentence that has gone out against you, to the sentence that went out against him. Are you cursed?—so was he. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Are you condemned?—so was he, and there was one point in which he excelled you; he was executed, and that you never shall be, if you look to him now and believe that he is able to save you, and put your trust in him.

In regard to the third particular. Our utter helplessness is such, that as I told you, we are unable to do any thing. Yes, and I want you to look at Christ; was not he unable too? You, in your father Adam, were once strong, but you lost your strength. Christ too was strong, but he laid aside all his omnipotence. See him. The hand that poises the world hangs on a nail. See him. The shoulders that supported the skies are drooping over the cross. Look at him, The eyes whose glances light up the sun are sealed in darkness. Look at him. The feet that trod the billows and that shaped the spheres are nailed with rude iron to the accursed tree. Look away from your own weakness to his weakness, and remember that in his weakness he is strong, and in his weakness you are strong too. Go see his hands; they are weak, but in their weakness they are stretched out to save you. Come view his heart; it is rent, but in its cleft you may hide yourself. Look at his eyes; they are closing in death, but from them comes the ray of light that shall kindle your dark spirit. Unable though thou art, go to him who himself was crucified through weakness, and remember that now "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." I told you, you could not repent, but if you go to Christ he can melt your heart into contrition, though it be as hard as iron. I said you could not believe, but if you sit down and look at Christ, a sight of Christ will make you believe, for he is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.

And then the fourth thing. "Oh," cries one, "you said we were too estranged to be even willing to come to Christ." I know you were; and therefore it is he came down to you. You would not come to him, but he comes to you this morning, and though you are very evil, he comes with sacred magic in his arm, to change your heart. Sinner, thou unwilling, but guilty sinner, Christ stands before thee this morning, he that was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, a man and a brother born for adversity. And he puts his hand to day in thy hand, and he says, "Sinner, wilt thou be saved?" Then trust in me. Ah! if I preach the gospel, you will reject it, but if *he* preaches it you cannot. Methinks I see the crucified one finding his way in that thick crowd under the gallery, and going between the ranks seated here, and above, and everywhere, and as he goes along, he stops at each broken-hearted sinner, and says, "Sinner, will you trust *me*? See here I am, the Son of God, yet I am man. Look at my wounds, see still the nail-marks, and the prints of the thorn-crown. Sinner, will you trust me?" And while he says it, he graciously works in you the grace of faith. But are there any who looking him in the face, can reply, "Thou crucified one we cannot trust thee, our sins are too great to be forgiven?" Oh, nothing can grieve him so much as to tell him that. You think that you are humble; you are proud; despising Christ while you think you are despising yourself. And is there one in all this great assembly who says, "This is all twaddle, I care not to hear such preaching as this?" Nay I do not ask thee to care for what I speak; but Jesus the crucified one is standing by thy side, and he asks thee, "Sinner, have I ever done anything to offend thee; have I ever done thee a displeasure? What hurt hast thou ever suffered at my hands? Then why dost thou persecute thy wife for loving me—then why hate thy child for loving one that did thee no hurt? Besides," saith he, and he takes the veil from his face, "did you ever see a face like this? It was marred by suffering for men—for men that hate me too, but whom I love. I need not have suffered. I was in my Father's house, happy and glorious; love made me come down and die. Love nailed me to the tree, and now will you spit in my face after that?" "No," said a young man to me this last week, "I found it hard to love Christ, but," said he, "once upon a time I thought 'Well, if Christ never died for me, and never loved me, yet I must love him for his goodness in dying for other people.'" And methinks if you did but know Christ, you must love him. Thou wouldst say to him, "Thou dear, thou suffering man, didst thou endure all this for those that did hate thee? didst thou die for those that murdered thee? didst thou

shed thy blood for those that drew it from thy veins with cursed iron? didst thou dive into the depths of the grave that thou mightest lift out rebellious ones who scorned thee and would have none of thee? Then dissolved by thy goodness I fall before thy feet and I weep. My soul repents of sin—I weep—Lord accept me, Lord have mercy upon me.”

Did you think I have run away from my point? So I had, but I have brought you back to it. You know I was to shew that Christ could overcome our depravity. And he has done it in some of you while I have been speaking. You hated him, but you do not hate him now. It may be, you said you would never trust him, but you do trust him now. And if God has done this in your heart, this is the true end of preaching; the best way of keeping to the subject, is for the subject to be brought home to the heart. Ah! dear hearers, I wish I had a better voice this morning. I wish I had more earnest tones and a more loving heart, for I do feel when I am preaching about Christ, that I am a poor dauber. When I grant to paint him so beautiful, I am afraid you will say of him, he is not lovely! No, no; it is my bad picture of him; but he is lovely. Oh! he is a loving Lord. He has bowels of compassion; he has a heart brimful of tenderest affection; and he bids me tell you—and I do tell you that—he bids me say, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.” And he bids me add his kind invitation, “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.” Do not believe what the devil tells you. He says that Christ is not ready to forgive; oh! he is more willing to forgive than you are to be forgiven. Do not believe your heart, when it says, that Christ will shut you out, and will not pardon you: Come and try him, come and try him; and the first one that is shut out, I will agree to be shut out with him. The first soul that Christ rejects after it has put its trust in him—I risk my soul’s salvation with that man. It cannot be. He never was hard-hearted yet, and he never will be. Only believe, and may he himself help thee to believe. Only look to him, and may he himself open thine eyes and enable thee to look, and this shall be a happy morning. For though I may have spoken feebly, as I am too conscious I have, God will have worked powerfully; and unto him shall be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Indexes

Index of Scripture References

Genesis

19:20 42:1 42:2

Exodus

12:13

Numbers

21:8

1 Samuel

18:17

2 Chronicles

31:1

Job

10:2

Psalms

1:4 2:12 44:1 78:41 80:10 116:1 138:8

Proverbs

8:4

Ecclesiastes

9:10

Song of Solomon

4:10-11

Isaiah

2:2 4 9:6 28:20 35:8 52:12

Jeremiah

5:22-23

Ezekiel

16:54 36:32

Daniel

5:27

Hosea

10:2

Jonah

3:9

Micah

4:1

Matthew

11:12 11:12 11:28-30 14:31

Mark

10:46-52

Luke

12:1 14:16 14:17 14:18 14:23 14:24 24:40

John

2:9-10 2:9-10 14:6 14:27

Acts

14:22

Romans

7:24 7:25 8:30 8:34 9:15 11:29

1 Corinthians

4:7

Ephesians

2:22 4:30

Philippians

1:23 3:13

Colossians

2:15

2 Timothy

1:9 1:12

Hebrews

3:1 10:14 11:8 12:2 13:20

1 Peter

2:7

1 John

1:9 4:16 4:19

Revelation

19:12 22:17

Index of Scripture Commentary

Genesis

19:20 42:1 42:2

Exodus

12:13

Numbers

21:8

1 Samuel

18:17

2 Chronicles

31:1

Job

10:2

Psalms

1:4 2:12 44:1 78:41 80:10 116:1 138:8

Ecclesiastes

9:10

Song of Solomon

4:10-11

Isaiah

2:2 9:6 28:20 35:8 52:12

Jeremiah

5:22-23

Ezekiel

16:54 36:32

Daniel

5:27

Hosea

10:2

Jonah

3:9

Micah

4:1

Matthew

11:12 11:28-30 14:31

Mark

10:46-52

Luke

12:1 14:23 24:40

John

2:9-10 2:9-10 14:6 14:27

Romans

7:24 7:25 8:30 8:34 9:15

1 Corinthians

4:7

Ephesians

2:22 4:30

Philippians

1:23

Colossians

2:15

2 Timothy

1:12

Hebrews

10:14 11:8 12:2 13:20

1 Peter

2:7

1 John

1:9 4:16 4:19

Revelation

19:12 22:17